TITLE PAGE

Title of thesis

Self and Open Studies: The Impact of Open Studies on Students' Sense of Identity and the Educational Implications.

(A qualitative investigation focusing on 13 students on certificated courses, but also drawing on the experience of other Open Studies students)

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SUMMARY

THIS thesis investigates the experience of adults undertaking Open Studies courses organised through Warwick University's Continuing Education Department. It focuses on a cohort of 13 students undertaking two-year certificated courses in Labour Studies, Women's Studies and Counselling. This longtitudinal period was chosen because it was felt it would allow enough time for the courses to make an impact on the students. To set this against a broader context, other Open Studies students not taking certificated courses were also interviewed. This included a group of five adults who started their own self-help Psychology group after being inspired by an Open Studies course.

The aim was to measure the impact of the courses on the students' sense of identity, since it was felt that there was potential for the learning on the courses to change students perceptions of themselves; in Mezirow's terms, they would experience 'perspective transformation'. This was felt to be an important effect, since it implies the continuing potential for cognitive development, and thus learning, in adults - a contentious issue - and also the ongoing concern with identity, as adults continue to 're-make' themselves in the face of their experience in an ever-changing world.

In order to reflect actual student experience, a qualitative approach is taken, relying heavily on in-depth interviews with the students. Although the research draws on the established adult education literature, it breaks new ground in its use of Rossan's model of identity to investigate adult experience in Open Studies (an under-researched area) and the implications of this for perception of adult potential generally, which until recent years has been largely negative.

While the results are not as clear-cut as a 'hard' scientific project might generate, there is evidence that the courses did have an impact on adult identity, and that this project has introduced a fruitful area for future research.

Contents

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Dedicated to

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Eric (my father), Jenny (my grandmother) and Elsie (my mother-in-law) who did not live long enough to see this work completed.

INTRODUCTION

Education for identity in a changing world: a question of meaning.

In a complex, rapidly changing world, where the pace of change itself is accelerating (Toffler, 1975) questions about 'self' and 'identity' - the need to know 'who' and 'what' we are - appear to be gaining significance, since although the 'fragmentation' and breakdown of established social and cultural structures undermines coherence and a shared sense of purpose (Stevens, 1985; 62) there remains the need to belong and to 'know what it means to be human' (Ignatieff, 1984; 28).

This is not only because of the potentially overwhelming pace of change, but also the nature of that change. The awesome scientific and technological advances which represent the progressive flow of the modern world threaten the very possibility 'of finding an ultimate meaning and purpose' in life (Appleyard, 1993; 227). The constant movement denies the individual '... a way of grasping his life other than as an episode in the flow' (ibid; 236):

> It does not offer a way of grasping and giving value to time in the only context that we genuinely know time - the context of the duration of our own lives (ibid; 236).

Yet the search for meaning lies at the heart of what it is to be human: it arises out of the individual's interactions with others, and forms the core of the human capacity to 'symbolize' or represent the experience of ourselves and the world (especially through the prime symbolic system of language) and the capacity to 'do things with intention'

(Stevens and Sapsford, 1984; 88), a capacity which begins in the earliest years (John and Dallos, 1984a). To discover 'who' and 'what' we are however, is a difficult and complex task (Holland, 1985). To begin with, what is meant by 'self' is confused:

> To examine the matter is either to find oneself examining everything and, therefore, nothing or it is to pursue some fantastically evasive fragment which vanishes every time we approach (Appleyard, 1993; 201).

And the concept of identity is no less elusive (Rosenberg, 1987). The bewildering array of choice - or 'overchoice' (Toffler, 1975; 289) - presented by modern societies pushes individuals towards self-examination, soul-searching and introversion, and crisis' (ibid; 290). As Toffler observes:

> The hunt for identity arises not out of the supposed choicelessness of 'mass society', but precisely from the plenitude and complexity of our choices (ibid, 290).

The issues are of continuing concern. For Erikson (1963; 282), the study of identity ' ... becomes as strategic in our time as the study of sexuality was in Freud's time'. Although he was writing some four decades ago, the growth of interest in the self and identity among contemporary theorists (Schlenker, 1985; Mischel, 1977; Honess and Yardley, 1987a; Mc Adams, 1988) suggests that the 'strategic' importance has remained, possibly with even greater relevance for today.

It is against this broad contextual background, of continual change and the gathering pace of modern existence, of the renewed interest in the self and identity, of the need for people to find meaning in their lives, that the current research has been

conducted. It does not take a sweeping global view, however, but instead focuses on the experience of individuals undertaking Open Studies through Warwick University's Continuing Education department. For change occurs, not only at the level of society or culture, but also at the level of the individual; although the individual both contributes to and is influenced by the wider social changes. The assumption is that in taking Open Studies courses, the individuals are 'seeking meaning' in their own lives and that this meaning affects their view of themselves, ultimately contributing to their sense of self and identity. But analysis at the individual level raises a host of questions: What does it mean to be an 'individual?' What is meant by change? What are the implications of this for perceptions of adulthood? And what has this to do with the education of adults?

These are some of the questions addressed during the course of this dissertation. They are important, because they bring into focus not just the experience of adults, but adults in the learning environment of Open Studies. This is significant because it affects not only the view of what adults are and what they are capable of - and until recent decades, this was a limited, largely pessimistic view, which regarded adulthood as a period of relative stability until inevitable decline - but also the role education can play in the lives of adults. A great deal of attention has been given to childhood experiences and development, but very little, in comparison, to the course of adult life (although this is changing). This research challenges earlier preconceptions, and depicts adults as active, purposeful individuals, who, given reasonably good health, are able to continue realising their potential throughout life. This is more than simply a bias in perspective, for it raises serious questions about the ability of adults to continue

learning; it implies, for instance, continued cognitive growth and development, something that, in some theoretical quarters, at any rate, was previously not acknowledged. One behavioural psychologist, for example, believes that old age and growth are a contradiction in terms (Skinner, cited in Friedan, 1994).

It is also assumed that cognitive reorganisation or transformation as adults encounter new challenges and experiences in life, generates changing perspectives, or increasingly comprehensive cognitive frameworks, that enable adults to comprehend the world. Such changed perspectives include perspectives on the 'self'. This involves seeing the 'self' and others in new ways, and suggests a continual 'revision' of the self and its counterpart 'identity' as a consequence of cognitive change. It is assumed that continuing education has an important part to play in this: (i) in *fostering critical awareness*, through which adults become aware of the psychological and cultural constraints on their lives and how, to some extent, they can 'transcend' these; (ii) in *supporting adult development* by providing the means, the 'learning environment', whereby adults can continue to flourish throughout life, and (iii) in helping to *create new meaning*, or inter-relating patterns of existence, which help adults to better comprehend the world they live in. These topics, and an outline of the chapters in this study, will be returned to shortly. Before then, a look at the notion of identity used in this research.

For the purposes of this research, identity is defined as a set of more-or-less integrated attitudes an individual holds towards him or herself (Rossan, 1987) which are inextricably linked to the individual's goals, values and beliefs (Waterman, 1984; 29). The model being used is that proposed by Rossan (1987; 306) comprising the

three components: (i) *core* (or fundamental sense of self; eg awareness of being a 'man' or 'woman'), (ii) *generalised traits* (broad qualities the individual attributes to him/herself because they are common to many role enactments; eg qualities or attributes such as 'warm', 'caring', 'companionable', which would be 'typical' characteristics of the individual) and (iii) *sub-identities* (which arise as a result of role enactments and are 'tied to positions held in the social structure' (ibid; 304). Sub-identities will include roles such as 'wife', 'mother', 'friend', 'teacher'. An individual, therefore, could be a 'warm and caring mother who teaches', which would include all three components of identity, and contribute towards the individual's sense of who and what they are, their 'location' in society and how they are regarded by others.

Rossan's model is chosen because of its conceptual simplicity - it yields insights into complex phenomena in an accessible way - but also for its comprehensiveness and potential explanatory value; it incorporates the notions of *continuity* (core) and *change* (sub-identities), of different *levels of functioning within the individual* (integrating the subjective 'self' of the *core*, the affective qualities attributed to that self by the individual in terms of *generalised traits*, and the more social 'role enactments' through *sub-identities*), and the *relationship between the self and how that self is presented to, and perceived by, others.*

Identity change can occur in all walks and at any stage of life (Erikson, 1959, 1963, 1968). Open Studies will impact upon this, it is argued, because the courses form a deliberate and structured learning experience, providing individuals with a sense of direction, support, continuity and progression. The extent to which the student

identifies, enters into and reflects upon the learning experiences presented by the course will influence the individual's sense of self in terms of the varying effects on the *sub-identities, generalised traits* and *core* components. As a result of Open Studies, for instance, a student may go on to register for a degree, and so acquire a further sub-identity, that of 'undergraduate', while the core sense of self is gradually changing through the sense of achievement and continued learning, revealing, perhaps, new intellectual abilities. That the Open Studies courses are deliberate and structured, it is assumed, increases the potential for impact upon the student's sense of self, since there will be a gradual accumulation - or internalisation - of knowledge, built on previous learning. Working through the courses in a methodical and guided way, it is felt, will help to both reinforce and extend the individual's knowledge and understanding, and in doing so gradually alter perspectives on the self as new awareness develops.

The concept of identity is here explored by drawing on certain aspects of life history - to establish a biographical context for the students' current view of self and their decisions regarding the courses they follow - and a reflective appraisal largely in the form of a self-report by the students on what the course has meant to them.

In this respect, it draws on people's reflective capacities, evoking James's (1890) concept of the subjective 'self-as-knower', reflecting upon the empirical 'self-as-known'. It also embodies an important source of adult identity identified by Rossan, that of 'cognitive complexity'. Since 'self' is itself regarded as a cognitive concept (Kreitler and Kreitler, 1987) the concept of cognitive complexity will now briefly be examined.

According to Rossan, cognitive complexity refers to the way people think about

themselves in different, and sometimes contradictory, ways. Indeed, one Open Studies student, confessed that she was 'ashamed' at the way she had sometimes physically hurt others when she was younger. She considered herself to be a caring and considerate person and it did not seem she was the 'same person' as her younger self. The behaviours were contradictory aspects of the student's experience that she 'had to come to terms with'. People may be able to tolerate more or less ambiguity in their identities or have many or few elements in their self vocabularies. One man interviewed for this study, for instance, gave very short, sharp replies with no elaboration. Asked to talk about himself, he restricted comments more or less to name, age, occupation, address, and some biographical detail. In contrast, one woman took several minutes to answer, identifying associations and drawing out the personal significance of these. In this case, the woman, who was born abroad, integrated comparisons and contrasts between the different cultures of her country of birth and Britain and indicated the importance of these to her sense of who she was. Through their verbal reports alone, then, the adults created contrasting representations of themselves; to use metaphors from the visual arts, in the examples above, one student's report was rather like an angular sculpture, the other a lyrical painting.

Cognitive complexity becomes an important thread in the current research in two ways. First, at a theoretical level, there is reference to research into adult cognitive development beyond Piaget's formal operational stage (Commons et al, 1984). Such research would seem to support the contention that there is further cognitive development throughout adulthood. This would suggest that adults do not reach a post-adolescent plateau, as was widely assumed in recent decades, with fully mature

and stable cognitive structures (Allman, 1983).

The second way in which cognitive complexity is important is in the students' self-reports. As was indicated above, what adults say and the manner in which they say it reflect both internal and external aspects of the students' sense of self. The students' internal mental representations and idiosyncratic speech forms reveal individual ways of thinking. They also contribute to an individual's external presentation of self - in this case, the self as a 'situated identity' (Alexander and Wiley, 1981) being specifically presented to the researcher. One student, for instance, considered herself to be the 'black sheep' of the family but also 'strong-willed' and 'a bit of a rebel'. Such concepts related to her mental image of herself, and were therefore not directly accessible to the researcher. Her linguistic style, however - sinuous, assertive, short, sharp sentences - seemed to correlate closely with her self-image, helping both to construct - and convey - her representation of self. Taking an Open Studies course reinforced the student's image of herself as a professional woman, since she felt it would contribute to her career prospects. It also reinforced the role of 'rebel', as other members of the family had not embarked upon similar kinds of study; from this point of view, her feelings of being 'different' and 'independent' were enhanced. As it happened, she also adopted a combative approach in the classroom, further reinforcing the sense of 'difference' between herself and others.

This dissertation has grown out of the Open Studies programme itself. It was stimulated by comments from students - mostly women - both within and outside Open Studies psychology night classes. The unsolicited remarks seemed to be revealing aspects of student experience that were not an overt part of the lessons, but

nevertheless appeared to be important in the lives of those concerned, and which related to the process of learning at this particular point in life. One student remarked that she had suffered a domineering mother and was now just beginning to break away and 'find her own feet'. She felt the Open Studies were something of 'her own'. The student was over 40. A younger woman reported that her husband did not like her attending night classes, but she was 'making a stand'. Another, nearing retirement, found Open Studies gave her 'new ideas' to think about.

In themselves, perhaps, the comments are relatively insignificant; after all, adults attend night classes for a variety of reasons. But on deeper consideration, they begin to reveal the dynamic, underlying experience of adults and the role that Open Studies can potentially play in their lives beyond that of being simply a 'social' occasion or an interesting 'pastime'. These students, it seemed, were finding their own space after years of 'being in the shadows', making a stand against an 'obstructive partner', discovering fresh ideas and new ways of seeing, even near the end of a working life. The fact that this was happening to adults of different ages suggested there might be more to adult development and identity formation than is usually appreciated.

It became clear that there was indeed much to be discovered. The question of identity itself, despite the prominence given to it by Erikson, was one that had received cursory attention. As Yardley and Honess (1987: xv) comment:

> Its recent history reveals only patchy interest from academics; for the most part the 'self' and its counterpart 'identity' have been virtually ignored or treated with mild derogation, particularly by psychologists, as being too mentalistic or elusive.

The potential of adults to learn, despite a long history of adult education in the UK (Legge, 1982; Kelly, 1992) has also been undervalued, with adults being deemed to have reached full cognitive maturity at around adolescence (Allman, 1983) with little possibility of further development. Indeed, Knowles (1990) referred to adult learners as a 'neglected species'.

What this study shows is that the perception of inevitably 'declining' adults with little potential for further cognitive development is far from accurate. Through interviews with students themselves, and using the concept of 'identity' - in itself problematic, as will be shown - to guide the investigation, the study explores a largely hidden aspect of adult experience on Open Studies, with a positive, if complex, portrait of adult life emerging.

The main focus is on 13 adults following Open Studies *certificated* and 10 taking *non-certificated* courses over a period of two years. Certificated courses were chosen because they are a deliberate and structured learning experience. It was assumed that over a period of two years, any effects of the courses on the students' sense of self would become more apparent. Additional non-certificated Open Studies (short-course) students and a number of post-graduate research students were also included, for comparative purposes and to lend depth and breadth to the study.

The new ground being broken includes the use of Rossan's (1987) model of identity in this context and the investigation itself into adult experience as part-time students. At the time of writing, there was no published material available on Rossan's model other than in the source publication (Honess and Yardley, 1987b) and a dearth of first-hand material on adult experience on Open Studies courses (Schuller, 1988). As

will be indicated in later sections, both the concept of identity and the experience of adult learners are attracting more research interest.

It will be also be demonstrated, that using the concept of identity to explore the experience of adults on Open Studies has proved a fruitful strategy, and suggests possible areas for further investigation. Because identity is related both to the fundamental sense of self and 'personhood', yet is also a social construction, with attributes derived from the culture into which the individual is born - it can be said to emerge at the intersection of biography and experience (Tennant, 1992) - it addresses a range of issues, including what it is to be an 'adult', how that adult relates to others, the continuing potential of adults to learn - and so change their perceptions of themselves and others - and the role of continuing education.

In an attempt to construct a faithful, multi-dimensional, yet integrated, representation, a wide-ranging approach is adopted, acknowledging, for instance, not only the social environment that the adults find themselves in, and the possible influence of this on their sense of identity through interaction with others, but also the cognitive dimension, and the question over whether there continues to be cognitive growth in adulthood. In this way, it is hoped, the study - while necessarily abstracted to some extent - is nevertheless not too far removed from its social context and the 'reality' as experience by the students. The theoretical complexities and diversity of perspectives within adult education are also addressed, in an attempt to convey the dynamic characteristics of the field, and the complex inter-relationship between them and the adults embarking upon their various 'learning projects'.

The thesis is organised into two parts. The first part (*Theoretical Orientations*) addresses theoretical and conceptual issues, and draws on the literature to establish the conceptual framework within which the research is conducted. It is wide-ranging, and as well as presenting broad theoretical perspectives, examines more specific topics such as cognitive development in adulthood and notions of 'self' and 'identity'. The second part (*Research: Methodology and Results* and *Discussion*) deals with the empirical research itself and includes methodology, results, discussion and implications for education. While this section draws on the academic literature as and when necessary, there is a heavy reliance on student quotations. This is to achieve a balance between the literature and the actual experience of adults on Open Studies courses, but also to reflect the qualitative nature of the project: after all, the purpose was to investigate student experience, and to let the students, to some extent, 'speak for themselves'. There are four chapters, each reflecting a different emphasis in the study, and each chapter is sub-divided into separate sections. These sections are numbered consecutively throughout. The organisation of material is therefore as follows:

PART ONE

THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS

CHAPTER 1

1: Theoretical perspectives: an integrative approach.

This outlines the broad theoretical perspective of the study. It adopts a multi-disciplinary approach, integrating psychological, educational and philosophical perspectives in order to reflect the complexities of being an adult on an Open Studies

course. It critically addresses the issue of 'individualism', and while recognising the negative implications of this perspective, also draws upon the philosophical concept of 'eudaemonia', or the sense of fulfilment (Waterman, 1984) to articulate the *experience* of being an individual, in terms of there being an 'ideal' that individuals aspire to. It introduces Mezirow's (1983, 1994a) notion of 'perspective transformation' as a way of helping to conceptualize the nature of change in adult learners. Finally, it briefly outlines the contribution of Freud and Piaget to the study. As two 'giants' of 20th-century thought, Freud and Piaget have exerted enormous influence over contemporary society. Although neither perspective is adopted in its own right, insights from both are drawn upon, providing a 'benchmark' against which to evaluate other theoretical orientations and helping to add depth, breadth and understanding to the experience of adults continuing their education.

2. Adulthood: a beginning or an end?

This section continues the theoretical orientation's theme by examining what it is to be an 'adult'. While at face value this may seem a straightforward task, it soon becomes clear that, in fact, trying to define the concept of 'adult' is more problematic than might be assumed. The literature and student experience is drawn upon to explore what might be regarded as a model of adults who are able to integrate diverse and sometimes contradictory aspects of themselves, and who are as much a 'process' as an 'entity' (Rogers, 1989). This carries important implications for the conceptualization and education of adults. On the one hand, notions of adulthood being some kind of 'end point' - with individuals reaching adulthood as fully mature beings - are found to

be lacking, and this study shows ways in which this image can be questioned. On the other hand, this suggests adults have the potential to continue learning and developing throughout life. Educators, then, are faced with addressing the issue of how best to facilitate the learning of individuals who are constantly changing. The relationship, from this point of view, is not 'traditional' and fixed, but fluid and progressive; individuals may be growing older but, from the point of view of education and learning, there is no end, only 'new beginnings'.

3. Adult education: critical opportunities in a theoretical jungle.

This section concludes the chapter on orientations by examining the theoretical diversity within adult education itself. It does not stray too far into the 'epistemological debate' surrounding issues to do with the 'identity' of adult education, but attempts to convey some of the concerns within adult education. This is to establish a context for the research and provide a broader conceptualization of the 'learning environment' in which the adult students find themselves. The implication is that the provision of adult education cannot simply be regarded as a 'given', and that to become more effective, adult educators may need to critically reflect upon their practice; indeed, some theorists, as will be shown, have called for greater theoretical understanding on the part of practitioners. Despite the potentially bewildering theoretical complexity within adult education, however - referred to here as a 'jungle' - it is argued that continuing adult education, particularly through programmes such as the Open Studies certificated courses, provides opportunities for adults that are important for lifelong learning and personal development. In addition to examining adult education in its own right, then,

this section links the earlier discussion on adulthood with the concerns of Chapter 2, namely, the cognitive development of adults and the questions of 'self' and 'identity'.

CHAPTER 2

4. Beyond Formal Operations: a continuing development.

Although until relatively recently it has been widely believed that full cognitive maturity was reached at around adolescence, with the implication that there was no further cognitive growth or development in adulthood, this has now been seriously questioned by those both outside and within cognitive psychology. Use of intelligence testing geared towards younger people, for instance, seemed to indicate a decline in intelligence when used on older people. However, the evidence now seems to indicate that it is not so much a case of natural and inevitable decline in later years, as an inappropriate use of tests; that is, they were not suitable for the older age groups being tested, and were seeking the 'wrong things'. Indeed, some research has indicated not only an insignificant decline in cognitive capacities but in some cases even an improvement (Friedan, 1994; 4). The idea of full cognitive maturity being reached in adolescence finds its most comprehensive expression in Piaget's concept of 'formal operations', the ability to think in an abstract fashion and manipulate mental representations, and which Piaget felt was the 'final stage' in development. This section looks at the issue of cognitive development from the perspective of those working within the Piagetian framework, yet who nevertheless point towards continuing development in adulthood.

5. Self and identity: a question of time, place and the meaning of others.

The issues of 'self' and 'identity' are attracting increasing attention and, as has been suggested, may become of even greater significance in the face of a rapidly changing world, in which old 'certainties' no longer exist and people try to maintain a sense of 'human-ness' in terms of who and what they are. Although in common everyday usage, the terms 'self' and 'identity' are far from straightforward when investigated more rigorously, and remain elusive. This section explores the concepts, and delineates Rossan's (1987) model of identity, which has essentially guided this study.

PART TWO

RESEARCH: METHODOLOGY, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

CHAPTER 3

6. Hypotheses and Method.

This section describes the methodology and presents the hypotheses and the rationale behind them. No attempt is made to establish an 'ultimate truth' or to discover 'immutable laws' about identity and the possible impact upon that of the Open Studies. Rossan's (1987) model of identity is used, rather, as an exploratory tool to investigate the experience of adults undertaking certain learning projects, as a way of coming to

better understand that experience, and its relationship to adult education as provided through the Open Studies, and to suggest possible fruitful avenues for further research. Because of the qualitative perspective of the research, there is heavy reliance on in-depth interviews, but other methods - a 'life diagram' and 'diary' - are used, with varying degrees of success, and these are discussed.

7. Results

This section presents an overview of the findings, and provides a 'thumbnail sketch' of the impact of the course on each Open Studies student interviewed. Unlike a more 'scientific' or 'quantitative' study, however, no hard and fast conclusions are drawn. Although it is suggested that the hypotheses can be supported, this is not in the sense of attributing a 'score' and measuring the difference in that score from one moment (beginning of the course) to the next (end of course). Rather, it is through 'textual analysis' of the interviews, seeking evidence of the possible impact of the course in terms of the *manifest content* of what the students say - in other words, they explicitly *relate* some changes to the impact of the course - and the 'hidden' or *implicit content*, in that what they say *reveals* the impact, or otherwise, of the course. For instance, when one student was asked whether she had experienced any emotional reactions - anger or frustration - during the course, she replied that the had not. During the interview, however, it emerged that, in fact, she had felt a deep sense of rage and frustration at certain points; she simply had not conceptualized it in that way, and had found it difficult to articulate the feelings directly.

CHAPTER 4

8. Discussion: On the Road to Learning.

The discussion section breaks down into two parts (*Discussion: On the Road to Learning* and *Discussion: Hypotheses Revisited - Identity, Issues and Implications*) in order to emphasize different aspects of the research and the experience of the adults. In this section, the emphasis is on the student experience while they are actually on the Open Studies courses. Reference to the 'road to learning' indicates the structure of this section, which traces student experience in a linear fashion, along a trajectory from the beginning (*Interview 1: Starting out - expectations and discovery*), through the 'middle' (*On course: travelling the education highway*) to the end *(Interview 2: Reaching the destination - satisfactions and discontents*). Student quotations are used to illustrate each 'phase'. This links the 'results' with the broader 'discussion' of section 9, in which the hypotheses are re-assessed and issues further discussed.

9. Discussion: Hypotheses revisited - Identity, Issues and *10. Implications.*

These final sections reiterate the hypotheses in attempt to show the extent to which they can be supported. There is clear evidence of change in the students - if nothing else, they 'know more' about the subject matter than they did before they started; but this in itself does not mean the course has impacted on their sense of identity in terms of helping them to become more critically aware of themselves and others or of the 'psycho-social' constraints on their lives. In fact, it is argued that the courses *have* had an impact on student identity, although this is not as clear cut as might have been

expected or hoped for. This in itself, however, makes the topic even more intriguing. A 'neat and tidy' nomothetic account of student experience may have produced a 'clean', hard, statistically significant, quantitatively satisfying depiction of students having undergone a two-year course of study, but would have missed the richness and the 'fuzziness' of the 'real life' the students were experiencing. In this final section, quotations are extensively used again to convey that 'real life'. There is also discussion of the value of qualitative research methods, and implications for education that have arisen out of this research. There are real outcomes that can be fed directly back into the classroom. Open Studies tutors will find the student comments of value in reflections upon their own practice, for example. And with this, the research comes full circle.

It was inspired by, and ends with, the consumers of adult education - the individuals in the classroom. In a complex, rapidly changing world, this research shows that adults are able to find meaning in their lives through education and learning. In turn, that helps them to define who and what they are. Indeed, Jarvis (1985; 5) argues that individuals *need* to keep learning in order to avoid becoming 'alienated from the culture that engulfs them'. People live in an increasingly uncertain age in which even what it means to be 'human' is under question. This thesis concludes that investigation into the concept of identity would be a fruitful way of exploring the experience of adults continuing to learn, and that the dynamic intersection where identity meets and is enhanced, or even changed, by education would provide a valuable focus for any future research agenda.

PART 1

THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS

CHAPTER 1

1. Theoretical perspectives: an integrative approach

This thesis focuses on the impact of Open Studies certificated courses on students' sense of self and in particular their sense of identity. In so doing, it addresses issues about the nature of identity and development and change in adulthood.

Each of these issues raises separate sets of questions which are discussed throughout the work. Taken together, they comprise a conceptual framework informing observation on adult experience within a particular context; that is, they provide a perspective on adults undertaking voluntary study for a variety of reasons, and all that this implies in terms of relating to other adults, forming new relationships, responding to, interpreting, and acting upon new information, satisfying expectations and realising potential. The qualitative nature of the research and subject matter - mainly in-depth interviews focusing on individual experience - places the work broadly within a social psychological framework, although material is drawn from different disciplines, including cognitive psychology, philosophy and educational studies. The research has been carried out through the Continuing Education department at Warwick University, and is intended to contribute to the department's education studies literature, and so feed back into the department's work. It is hoped that it will provide insight into, and raise questions about, the experience of adults continuing their

education and will therefore be of value to department staff, Open Studies tutors, research students and others interested in the experience of adults learning.

Through this multi-dimensional and integrative approach, an attempt is made to construct a picture of rounded, multi-faceted individuals, with a sense of agency and purpose, interacting in complex ways with their environment and the people in it. It deliberately cuts across such limiting divisions as implied, for example, by the old nature/nurture debate, in which people's development was seen *either* in terms of their biological inheritance *or* as a result of responding to the environment (Argent et al, 1980; Dobson et al, 1987; Greenough, 1973; Hayes and Orrell, 1987). It takes the view that human growth and development emerges out of a complex interaction between nature *and* nurture. In this sense, it reflects the ecological concern with the individual's place in the environment (Hormuth, 1990) and the cognitive-developmental focus on interaction between the two (Brazelton, 1974; Piaget, 1964) but is also reminiscent of the humanistic approach in psychology, which tries to deal with the whole person, rather than analysing the individual into bits and looking at the bits *ad nauseum* (Hemming, 1982). The humanistic approach would say that 'here is an individual born with a certain set of potentialities into a certain society. Will he or will he not fulfil those potentialities in an effective way within the culture into which he is born?' (Hemming, 1982). In this case, the interest is in the potential of adults in a learning environment.

Psychological and philosophical perspectives themselves are brought together in the depiction of identity. The concept is not represented here as a 'linear', one-dimensional or static state. Although a 'pre-determined' model (Rossan, 1987) is used as a method of approaching the topic, any simple claims of cause-and-effect are avoided. Rather,

identity is regarded as a multi-layered, dynamic concept, intimately related to the growth and development of the individual. While the individuals are regarded as having an identity; that is, they 'know who they are and where they are going' (Erikson, 1959) and, equally importantly, they are recognised and 'known' by others (their personal identity includes a social as well as purely personal and private dimension), it is nevertheless also assumed that the same individuals are themselves not fixed or static. They are at the confluence of interacting forces (Stevens, 1983; 44), a multitude of influences, emotions, experiences and circumstances. The 'confluence' itself is part of the flow of life. While it is assumed there is constancy over time - after all, the students interviewed for this project were demonstrably the 'same' students on each occasion they were seen - it is also assumed there is continual change; at the second interview, for instance, the students were, if nothing else, older and had undergone further experiences.

This points to the problematic nature of defining such terms as 'self', 'identity', 'change' and 'development' (which are addressed later) as well as acknowledging that in the common-sense 'real world' away from the refinements of theory, such concepts are even more perplexing; people think about themselves in different ways and give varying degrees of thought to such matters. This thinking itself occurs within the flow of everyday life. And, to borrow a term from cognitive psychology, at this level the borders between concepts become extremely 'fuzzy' (Roth and Frisby 1986); human development and relationships do not fit into neat categories. Real life is messier than the psychology lab!

The broad orientation reflects the 'defining task' of social psychology, which is to investigate the interrelationships between society, the social person, and social

behaviour (Stryker and Serpe, 1982). The method, too, of examining a relatively small area of adult experience reflects the general social psychological strategy of narrowing the task by 'selecting particular dimensions of society, persons and behaviour as especially worthy of attention' (Feldman, 1986). In this study, adults undertaking voluntary educational activity are deemed to be 'worthy of attention'.

The emphasis on a particular area of individual experience also places the research within the bounds of the social psychology of education, which:

> ... represents an amalgamation of the two fields: it is not merely social psychology, nor is it merely education. Instead, the social psychology of education represents an interface of the two fields, which has produced a broad range of theories, research and data that speak to the interests of educators and psychologists (Feldman, 1986: 2).

In terms of psychology's contribution to education, Tennant (1988), points out that it is frequently used as a foundation discipline in the training of adult educators because it ' ... addresses those questions which naturally emerge from an engagement with adult teaching and learning ' (p153). He advocates a critical awareness on the part of practitioners, enabling an understanding of events and one's reactions to them.

The psychological orientation, then, helps to provide a focus. It is intended that such an orientation will be of use to practitioners in adult education, particularly Open Studies tutors, in at least two ways. On the one hand, there are the findings of the study, which will be of intrinsic interest. Statistical analysis is avoided. With the relatively small number of students involved, and the qualitative nature of the research, it was felt that a statistical approach would be inappropriate, and would add little to the overall character of the work. (This is not to say that the findings would not be amenable to statistical analysis. See Bell, 1987; Greene & D'Oliveira, 1985). The

intention is to provide a readable text, reflecting the students' own 'narratives' (Cohler, 1982; Baltes and Brim, 1982), in order to convey a 'coherent and illuminating story' (McAdams 1988; 2) and to stimulate thinking about the experience of adults on Open Studies courses. Ultimately, it is argued that the insights yielded could enhance classroom practice. On the other hand, there are the theoretical concepts themselves which, it is hoped, will also be of interest and, to follow Tennant's (1988) lead, will stimulate further investigation into the theoretical aspects of adult experience.

Individualism: a matter of contention.

That the study concentrates on a relatively small number of individuals, values individual experience, and places the 'individual' at the centre of the investigation, raises the contentious issue of 'individualism'. For the focus on the student as 'individual' carries positive and negative connotations. There is the concept of the 'relatively autonomous, self-contained' individual, who is able to realise his or her potential and act in an ethical manner as a fully integrated member of society. In this sense, the individual is depicted as having been liberated from earlier cultural constraints, to enjoy a new autonomy and mobility within society. Yet there is also the argument that the experiences and concerns of the individual have been elevated at the expense of the broader concerns of the group or even society; emphasising qualities such as self-reliance and independence, locating the self at the centre of the value system and relegating 'society' to the periphery, with destructive consequences. Such a position gives rise to what has been identified as the tension between individualism and collectivism (Tennant, 1988) and the further implications of an ideal that effectively sustains the 'anti-social', with the individual set apart from or hostile to society (Lukes,

1972). Since the 'individual' features strongly in this work, some time will now be spent further exploring the issue of individualism.

The heartland of individualism is North America, from where emerges the ideal of the 'firmly bounded, highly individuated conception of personhood' (Sampson, 1989; 3) in which the individual is regarded as ' ... a relatively autonomous self-contained and distinctive universe', an entity who is the ' ... integrated centre of certain powers: one who is aware, who feels, who thinks, judges and acts. In concept, the individual is accepted as the primary reality' (ibid). This clear-cut conception has been strongly criticised and is said to 'reflect the sham and the illusion that is the bourgeois individual, not its reality' (ibid). That reality, as the critical theorists argue:

> ... is quite different. The conception describes a fictitious character, the bourgeois individual, whose integrated wholeness, unique individuality and status as subject with actual powers to shape events has become null and void (Sampson, 1989; 3).

To some, the ideology of individualism carries negative implications for Western adult education. Keddie (1980) for example, argues that giving primacy to the individual serves to ' ... obscure the contradictions inherent in the adult educator's role'. She contends that the middle-class values underpinning the education system as a whole give particular social and political meanings to individualism ' ... which reflect the educational and cultural models of the elite'. (ibid; 47). In Keddie's view, the middle-class emphasis on the individual is damaging to the broader ideals of bringing adult education to more people. Some members of society, for instance, may not be as financially independent or socially competent as others, who, because of their

advantageous economic and social circumstances, are able to derive greater benefit from the educational 'system'.

In a broader cultural context, it is argued that the institutional fabric whose function has been to provide meaning and stability for the individual has become incohesive. Berger et al (1974), argue that modern social structures have provided the context for 'highly individuated persons' and that concomitantly:

> ... modern society has given birth to ideologies and ethical systems of intense individualism. Indeed, it has been suggested that the theme of individual autonomy is perhaps the most important theme in the world view of modernity (Berger et al, 1974; 175).

One benefit of modernity is that it has liberated human beings from ' ... the narrow controls of family, clan, tribe or small community. It has opened up for the individual previously unheard of options and avenues for mobility' (ibid). But the price of this 'individuation' is alienation:

> Inevitably, the individual is thrown back upon himself, on his own subjectivity from which he must dredge up the meaning and the stability he requires to exist (Berger et al, 1974; 175).

It is clear that simply choosing the 'individual' as the 'unit of study' is far from value-free. However, it does integrate both psychological and philosophical orientations, and contributes to the overall theoretical orientation of this study. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that adult educators sometimes talk and write about 'education as social action' in a way that 'reifies the collective and overlooks the fact that it is individuals (and *only* individuals) who can learn'. (Leicester, 1993).

Individualism: a philosophical dimension.

The philosophical dimension is here drawn from 'ethical individualism', and in particular, the concept of 'eudaimonism' - a person's efforts to recognise and live in accordance with the 'true self'. (Waterman, 1984). It is relevant because it combines psychological and philosophical concepts, and is particularly concerned with self and personal identity. For the purposes of this study it helps to illuminate aspects of individual experience, and convey what it is to be 'an individual'.

Ethical individualism derives its specifically ethical dimension from the application of the principles of universality (Norton, 1976). These principles, which 'serve limits on behaviour' are: (a) freedom of choice, (b) respect for the integrity of others and (c) justice as equity. Freedom of choice refers to the notion that if the individual is to strive for the fulfilment of personal potential, then he or she ' .. must be free to choose those courses of action seen as most promising for further actualization' (op. cit; 23). At the same time the individual must not attempt to deprive others of their freedom to choose; where co-operation with others is required, it cannot be compelled, rather it must be elicited ' ... through a process of voluntary association or exchange'. (ibid; 24) Respect for the integrity of others involves seeing others as possessing a dignity comparable to one's own; and the capacity to have that respect '... is the function of the psychological process of empathy or role-taking' (ibid). Our perceptions of ourselves and the way we interact with others are constituted partly by the perceptions - and understanding - we have of others

> By being able to place ourselves in the position of others ... we may best appreciate what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable forms of interaction (ibid).

The final theme, justice as equity, reflects the idea that a social relationship is considered to be inequitable if the outcomes to the participants 'are not proportional to the nature and extent of their respective inputs' (Waterman, 1984; 24). In other words, there is a shared responsibility within a relationship to ensure that the participants are not exploiting each other.

The 'universal' element of ethical individualism implies that individuals are not living in isolation, that they are, in fact, part of a shared culture and have a responsibility towards others. After all, ethical individualism does 'serve limits on behaviour.' This apparent 'universality', however, is also open to question, since the archetypal North American 'individual' cannot simply be applied to other cultures. What the concept of ethical individualism does do for this study, however, is suggest that the notion of 'individualism' need not imply simply narcissistic 'self-centredness' and lack of social responsibility. Through its principle of 'respect for the dignity of others', for example, it suggests that individuals can function *as* 'individuals' yet still be part of and contribute towards a wider community and social context.

Ethical individualism also embodies the notion of 'eudaimonism', which provides a convenient descriptive term to help conceptualize the abstract, metaphorical world of personal strivings and satisfactions. There may be questions over whether, in fact, there is such an entity as the single 'true' self of eudaimonism. Yet in striving to achieve, individuals often have an ideal they are working to, setting their own internal standards as well as attempting to meet those imposed externally. What people *believe* to be the case can often influence behaviour more dramatically than what is *actually* the case; they can act *as if* something were so (Assagioli, 1990). And the abstract notion of a 'true' or 'ideal' self can provide direction, purpose and meaning to life. At the same

time, the concept of a true or ideal self is related to the *potential* people feel they have. This can directly influence behaviour. If a student chooses to attend an Open Studies course because of the belief in his or her potential to learn - and perhaps move closer to an ideal self - then that is a very *real* decision, affecting many areas of the individual's life.

The concept of the 'daimon', or true self, is useful in so far as it articulates an ideal that individuals relate to and strive to achieve; it is essentially individualistic, since the ideal is an internal representation, manifesting itself in such notions as 'development', 'autonomy' and 'self-actualization", the latter being defined by Maslow (1968;25) as:

> ... the ongoing actualization of potentials, capacities and talents, as fulfillment of mission (or call, fate, destiny or vocation) as a fuller knowledge of, and acceptance of, the person's own intrinsic nature, as an unceasing trend towards unity, integration or synergy within the person.

The daimon, for example, refers to:

> ... those potentialities of each person, the realization of which represents the greatest fulfillment in living of which each is capable. (Waterman 1984;15).

The conscious strivings of students to succeed in their tasks, to complete assignments, to persevere to the end of their chosen course and the feelings of achievement and satisfaction at having done so, can be seen as 'eudaimonia', although it is not a term students themselves would use in describing such achievements.

The daimon also describes the end-goal or 'telos' of behaviour:

> It is the final cause, that for the sake of which the person acts. It provides purpose and meaning to living. (ibid;16).

The idea of the daimon being the 'telos' of behaviour is a useful reminder that people are ends in themselves - that is, they exist in their own right - and that fulfilment can be seen in terms of an 'end-point' in that the *quality* of achievement or fulfilment is absolute. But this does not mean that development, growth and change simply come to a halt. In this research, learning is regarded as a life-long process with no end-point.

Finally, that the daimon should be interpreted as a set of inter-related psychological processes contributes to the notion of a related whole, and the integration of psychology and philosophy. It also contributes to the question of whether a person can be said to have a 'single, daimonic potential to be actualized or many potentials, the pursuit of any being in the direction of self-fulfillment':

> The idea there is a single "true" potential, innately established, is almost certain to be found to be unsatisfactory by psychologists accustomed to the study of the interactions of individuals with their physical and social environments (ibid; 18).

The concept of ethical individualism and 'eudaimonsim' in particular, contributes to a differentiated model of identity which attempts to combine the philosophical with the psychological, acknowledging both the sense in which the individual may experience 'self-fulfilment' or 'self-actualization', and perceive him or her self as a distinct and individual being, while at the same time, encompassing the psychological assumption that there are actually many 'selves' (and that these are formed through social interaction and reflection). Indeed, Waterman himself warns against the reification of the daimon as a kind of external 'guiding spirit', and acknowledges that:

> To be consistent with the standards of contemporary theories, the daimon should be interpreted as being a number of interrelated psychological processes. (ibid; 17).

Although this study conveys the notion of students as individuals, then, 'individualism' as such, is not taken at face value. Learning does not occur in a social vacuum. The very nature of the Open Studies courses, with students attending each week for 10 weeks per course for up to two years, provides an environment for social interaction and the potential for individuals to learn from others in a social context.

Perspective transformation

Learning implies changes in viewpoint and understanding, and a final theoretical orientation relevant to this research is that of Mezirow's (1983) perspective transformation. Perspective is here taken to mean the ' ... evolving cognitive framework which incorporates the concepts, beliefs, values, interests and emotions through which one comprehends the world' (Leicester, 1989; 1993). More specifically, perspectives provide a 'point of view'; they:

> ... *sensitize* the individual to parts of physical reality, they *desensitize* the individual to other parts, and they help the individual *make sense* of the physical reality in which there is sensitization (Charon, 1992: 3. Author's emphasis)

The 'conceptual framework' aids comprehension, but cannot capture the whole physical reality:

> Perspectives are almost infinite; thus we can never claim to have found all possible perspectives on anything (ibid).

Because of this perspectives can, and indeed, do, change; they are 'situational', so they can 'change from situation to situation, often many times during the same day' (ibid) or they can be more profound, basic, transformations.

The concept of perspective transformation has a bearing on this study, since what is being examined is the impact of Open Studies on students' sense of identity, and the changes this might entail. The Open Studies programme itself is regarded as a structured learning environment, which because students receive guidance and are introduced to concepts in a methodical and cumulative way, encourages reflection and critical awareness. It is assumed that because the structured process enables students to build on what has gone before, it also helps them to move towards what Mezirow (1983; 125) refers to as more authentic 'meaning perspectives', or a 'more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience' whereby the individual becomes 'critically aware' of the social and cultural constraints on his or her thinking and action. This increasing awareness, or 'perspective transformation' deepens the concept of individual experience by conveying the idea of *change* through time, with the individual continuing to learn from experience and integrating this into increasingly comprehensive perspectives. Mezirow, for instance, sees adulthood as a time for reassessing the assumptions of one's formative years which have resulted in distorted views of reality (Leicester, 1993; 25). The idea of changing perspectives is compatible with recent thinking on adult development and the potential of adults throughout life (Friedan, 1994; Fisher, 1993); indeed, Mezirow argues that the process of perspective transformation parallels the process of adult development, or even more strongly, that it ' ... is the engine of adult development' (1994a; 228). In order to understand his position more clearly, a brief statement of Mezirow's model will now be given. Since it

has not been accepted uncritically, this will be followed by reference to some key critical points.

Mezirow's transformational learning is fundamentally concerned with construing meaning from experience (Clark and Wilson, 1991; Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow (1994a; 222) aims to derive meaning from experience in order to provide ground for action:

> Learning may be understood as *the process of construing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to action.*

The process of learning to make meanings is 'focused, shaped and delimited' by what Mezirow (ibid; 223) refers to as our 'frames of reference' or 'meaning structures'. These meaning structures are two-dimensional, involving *meaning perspectives* and *meaning schemes.* 'Meaning perspectives' refer to:

> ... broad sets of predispositions resulting from psychocultural assumptions which determine the horizons of our expectations. (ibid; 223).

They are:

> ... *the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions within which new experience is assimilated and transformed by one's past experience.* (Mezirow, 1983: 125. Author's emphasis).

A meaning perspective provides an '... orienting frame of reference or personal paradigm' (Mezirow, 1989: 171). In other words, it is a generalised framework of meaning, or presuppositions, that is brought to bear on new experiences; these are

responded to and interpreted in the light of previous experience, and are changed in the process.

A more specific dimension of meaning structures are 'meaning schemes'. Meaning schemes are:

> ... the constellation of concept, belief, judgment, and feeling which shape a particular interpretation (e.g., when we think of abortion, black people, Muslim religion, free market capitalism, or liberalism). Meaning schemes are specific manifestations of our meaning perspectives. (Mezirow, 1994a; 223).

These two dimensions making up the meaning structures can be interpreted in terms of the general outlook of the individual (meaning perspective) and the particular way in which that outlook manifests itself in attitudes and behaviour in specific situations (meaning scheme).

The transformation of meaning structures is achieved through reflection, which Mezirow (ibid) defines as:

> ... attending to the grounds (justifications) for one's beliefs.

This can be unsettling, since such reflection causes us to question cherished beliefs and occurs when ' ... the beliefs are not working well for us' or where ' ... old ways of thinking are no longer functional.' Reflection is triggered by a 'disorienting dilemma' which has to be confronted:

> Reflection involves a critique of assumptions to determine whether the belief, often acquired through cultural assimilation in childhood, remains functional for us as adults. We do this by critically examining its origins, nature and consequences. (ibid).

These 'existential challenges of adulthood' (Mezirow) involve a process of negotiating an irregular succession of transformations in 'meaning perspective', which ultimately lead to 'emancipation' through heightened awareness:

> ... the emancipatory process *of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships, reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive and disriminating integration of experience and acting upon these new understandings.* It is the learning process by which adults come to recognise their culturally induced dependency roles and relationships and the reasons for them and take action to overcome them. (1983; 125. Author's emphasis).

For Mezirow (1994a), transformative learning lies at the heart of adult education:

> Adult development means the progressive realization of an adult's capacity to fully and freely participate in rational dialogue, to achieve a broader, more discriminating, permeable and integrative understanding of his/her experience ... (ibid; 226).

Meaning transformations become possible as learners:

> ... come to be critically reflective of the presuppositions upon which their beliefs are predicated and learn about their sources and consequences (Mezirow, 1989: 172).

Brookfield (1986: 213) points to personal change through 'critical reflectivity', where significant personal learning involves evaluating preconceptions and redefining 'self' in terms of who the person is and that person's relationship with the environment and others. Learning, from this point of view, might be defined as that:

> ... in which adults come to reflect on their self-images, change their self-concepts, question their previously internalized norms (behavioural and moral), and reinterpret their current and past behaviours from a new perspective ...
>
> ... [It] entails fundamental change in learners and leads them to redefine and reinterpret their personal, social, and occupational worlds. In the process, adults may come to explore affective, cognitive and psychomotor domains that they previously had not perceived as relevant to themselves (ibid; 213-214).

While Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation has been influential in adult education, it has not escaped critical attention. There is not space to deal with the renewed and continuing debate over transformation theory (See: Collard and Law, 1989; Mezirow, 1989; Hart, 1990; Clark and Wilson, 1991; Mezirow, 1991, 1994a, 1994b; Tennant, 1993, 1994; Newman, 1994). But there are those who argue that it fails to account for the context upon which it depends (Clark and Wilson, 1991), that it underemphasizes the importance of collective social action as a goal (Collard and Law, 1989) focusing on the 'individual' at the expense of the 'social' (Tennant, 1988, 1993), and that it fails to account for the issue of power and its relationships of dominance (Hart 1990). Perspective transformation, then, can be thought to emphasise individual development and the individual learner, rather than community development and collective learning through social change (Leicester, 1993; 27).

Tennant (1988; 146) further points out that both Mezirow and Brookfield have 'depoliticized' the idea of critical awareness, in that ' ... they focus inwardly, as it were, on the liberation of the learner and they very much stand on the fence when it comes to organizing collective action'. Mezirow (1985; 29) himself argues that his function is not to lead or organize for collective action ' ... but to help learners become aware of the cultural contradictions that oppress them'. It is an alternative approach to collective 'action', he claims, but does not ignore the social dimension:

> I have attempted to emphasize how learning is profoundly social. I have also tried to show how social action may be action other than collective political action, as when we act upon our transformed meaning structures to effect changes in our interpersonal relationships or in the family. (Mezirow, 1994a; 230).

Freud and Piaget: a brief visit.

The implication of Mezirow's 'critical reflection' is that it can continue throughout life, that individuals can become aware of the 'cultural constraints' and form new perspectives on their lives at any age. In contrast, the theories of Freud and Piaget would suggest, in their different ways, that basic psychological and cognitive structures of adulthood are established by adolescence. For Freud, the foundations of adulthood are laid down within the first five years. For Piaget, cognitive structures are fully developed by about the teenage years. Since the theories of these key thinkers of the 20th century have some bearing on the overall theoretical orientation of the research, although they do not form the main perspective, they will now be briefly considered.

The value of Freud's (1985; 1986) psychoanalytic theory is that it highlights the importance of childhood influences on adult life, draws attention to possible internal conflict which can affect thinking and behaviour - and possibly response to the classroom environment and authority figures such as teachers - and indicates how 'repressed' painful thoughts and experiences, banished to the 'unconscious', can nevertheless influence behaviour, even though the person may not be consciously aware of this influence. Since the goal of psychoanalysis is to achieve balance between conflicting forces, it points to the ideal of an integrated and healthy 'ego state', and so to a positive sense of identity. Through its emphasis on the

importance of early childhood on adult characterstics, it also points to the continuities in personal development: that within the adult there continues to reside the influences of the child.

Examples from Freud's theory of psychosexual development will serve to illustrate how he saw childhood experiences affecting adult characteristics. Freud argued that the individual grows through a series of developmental stages in the early years: namely, oral, anal, phallic and latency. These correspond to different levels of interest in and awareness of various parts of the body. Freud referred to these areas as 'erogenous zones', and each zone brought its own distinct forms of 'sensual' pleasure. At the anal stage, for example, pleasure is derived from retention and elimination of the faeces.

The stages are assumed to establish the foundations for characteristics in adult life. Arrested development, or 'fixation', at any stage, will have far-reaching psychological consequences. According to Freud, deprivation or over gratification at the oral stage, for instance, will result in an adult who is overly concerned with oral gratification. This may take the form of sucking or chewing sweets, smoking, drinking or even talking excessively. The activities associated with the mouth are regarded as a prototype of particular personality characteristics; for example: taking in (acquisitiveness), holding on (determination), biting (destructiveness), spitting out (contemptuousness) and closing (negativism). There need not be a direct one-to-one correspondence between the infantile action and the adult characteristics, however. Through what Freud called displacement, or distortion, for example, oral aggression associated with 'biting' can appear as argumentativeness and sarcasm - making 'biting' remarks (Barnes, 1982a; 17).

The anal stage is seen as having important implications for the relationship between child and parent, and Freudian analysts consider that the foundation for key personality

characteristics is laid down at this time. This is when toilet training can become an issue, leading to conflict and rebellion. In the course of such training, the child is required to gain control of his bowel movements and excrete at the proper time and place. However, by producing faeces he can express active compliance with his environment; by witholding them, his disobedience. In response to the demands made upon him, he can submit, rebel or learn to cope with authority while maintaining his own authority (Stevens, 1983; 40). Anal characteristics of adult personalities might include obsessive orderliness and cleanliness (as a result of severe constraint at the anal stage), creativeness (if parents have reinforced 'production on the potty') or meanness (from a child developing an unwillingness to 'let go').

There has been a great deal of critical evaluation of Freud, and the modern critical approach would argue that while Freud was a 'great original', many of his observations fail to stand the test of time (Storr, 1982); the attribution of the obsessional personality to difficulties encountered during toilet training, for example, have been virtually disproved. Also, modern theory has shifted very much away from trauma to thinking about the whole interpersonal setting in which the individual develops. And finally, to return to the metaphor of the 'whole person', while there is value in drawing on Freudian theory, and learning from its insights, Freud was nevertheless a man of his times. As educational psychologist James Hemming (1982) puts it:

> Freud was really a 19th-century mind, and looking on the mind as a mechanism divided into its interacting parts, regarding the drive of personality as a set of biological forces or instincts which were trying to manifest themselves over and against the inhibitions and obstructions of society. And what didn't fit was repressed and that created conflicts and that created neuroses. It doesn't accept the personality as a rich emerging entity throughout life ... if it is nourished and encouraged it will go on growing and you will get the full actualistion of what is there; the basic potentialities.

The significance of this for adults undertaking Open Studies is that they may well carry their personal - and sometimes painful - histories with them, but that there is the potential to continue growing, developing and transcending early traumas, and not to remain 'fixated' victims of their own selves, as Freudian theory might suggest.

Piaget and beyond

As with Freud, Piaget (1964) suggests that a child progresses through a series of stages as he or she develops. Piaget, however, stressed cognitive, or intellectual, development. This development includes coordination of body movements and skills. According to Piaget, any adaptation of an individual to an environment necessarily implies an organisation within the individual (Oates and Floyd, 1979). He sees the interaction between the organism and environment as essential for cognitive development: the 'motivation' comes from within the individual, but a stimulating environment nourishes and encourages cognitive growth. As this growth occurs, the organism is motivated to learn more, and in turn continues to interact with the environment.

Piaget provides a useful conceptual framework against which to assess the continuing development of adults. He suggests that his fourth stage - formal operations - attained at around adolescence, is the final one; by this stage, according to Piaget, the child has fully-developed cognitive structures and is able to perform 'logical operations', that is mentally formulate hypotheses, test them and manipulate mental representations. (Murphy, 1984; 89). For Piaget, this is the highest form of thinking - with the implication that there is no further cognitive development in adulthood. This

has been seriously challenged, and is addressed in the section on 'Beyond Formal Operations'.

Piaget equates intelligence with adaptive thinking and action. As the child moves through the stages, there is a growing complexity of mental organisation, reflected in behaviour; individuals are seen as having characteristic ways of functioning, which change in crucial ways as development progresses. Briefly, the main stages of cognitive development are: sensorimotor (from birth to 18months); pre-operational (two to seven years); concrete operational (seven to 12) and formal operations (up to around 15). At each of these stages different competencies emerge. At the sensorimotor stage, for instance, the child is described by Piaget as being 'egocentric'; that is, he is unable to assume the role of another person or recognise viewpoints other than his own. The infant's world consists only of his or her actions and the objects that are immediately presented to it. It is the stage of sensory motor activity (looking, grasping, sucking) without thought as adults know it. Later, the child is able to construct images or representations of things, referred to as 'object permanence' - the realization that an object continues to exist even if it is not immediately available to the senses. It means the child is able to 'think' about objects, even when they are not there. By the end of this first stage, behaviour becomes less mechanical, more deliberate, and the child is on the threshold of symbolic or internalized action (ie, he is able to 'think' about his actions). This includes the first signs of language - enabling the child to represent events to himself.

As the child progresses through each stage, so more skills are acquired; crucially, the ability to use symbols to represent experience and to manipulate mental images. During the pre-operational stage, from the age of around two, a child is able to

manipulate representations, but his thought is still restricted compared to that of an adult; it is intuitive and still egocentric. The child is unable to focus on more than one characteristic of an object at a time. He will agree that two balls of plasticine of the same size *are* the same size, for example, but when one is rolled out like a sausage or flattened like a pancake, will believe the new shape contains more plasticine. But it is also during this pre-operational stage that the capacity for representational thought becomes more sophisticated. Language continues to develop - cognitive development can occur through instruction and interaction with others, instead of only sensorimotor learning - and other behavioural indicators suggest the growth of symbolic representation: children are able to defer imitation (ie, the child is able to imitate an absent model), enter symbolic play (games of make believe and pretend), dream and verbally recall events from the past (including recalling complicated stories, repeating jokes and recounting memories).

By the time the child has completed the concrete operational stage, during which he learns to draw on logical structures for solutions - i.e., he can reason symbolically - and moved into formal operations, he is able to apply logical reasoning to abstract problems.

In conclusion, this section has presented the broad theoretical orientation of the work: an eclectic, integrative approach, focusing on the 'individual' rather than the 'collective' and depicting the individual as a rounded, multi-dimensional, purposeful being who seeks meaning and has the potential to continue learning throughout life. This contradicts earlier models of adults reaching a 'plateau' until the inevitable decline of old age. The psychological perspective combines a 'critical awareness' approach - assuming that through reflection, individuals are able to reinterpret their current and

past behaviours from new perspectives - with the humanistic orientation of viewing the individual as a 'whole person' rather than analysing the person into abstract 'bits'. This 'whole person' is seen within the social context of his or her own background history, as well as that of part-time mature student on an Open Studies programme. The theories of Freud and Piaget implicitly or explicitly provide depth and a broader frame of reference, generating awareness, for instance, of the possible anxieties, internal conflicts, or 'crises' facing adults (Freud) and stimulating enquiry into cognitive development - and adult thinking - beyond the 'final' mature system of formal operations reached in adolescence (Piaget). Finally, the experience of adults on an Open Studies course is depicted in terms of identity, and the effect of the courses on that identity. It is assumed that through the structured learning process of Open Studies, students gain new insights not just into the subjects they are studying, but also themselves, and so their sense of who and what they are. The actual model of identity used is discussed in a later section. In keeping with the qualitative, person-oriented perspective, the thesis avoids abstracted statistical analysis, and provides a text-based 'narrative' of student experience, so combining form with content. Before looking at that experience, however, some time is spent exploring what being an 'adult' means. That forms the focus of the next section.

2: Reaching adulthood: a beginning or an end?

The previous section set out the theoretical orientation of this study. In particular, within an inter-disciplinary approach, it pointed towards the ongoing interaction between individual and society, which sustains both continuity and change in adult identity throughout life. But the very concept of 'adult' is not as straightforward as it might appear and gives rise to a number of questions. How is adulthood to be defined? What distinguishes adults from children? When does middle-age begin? What is 'old age?' What thoughts and feelings does being an 'adult' engender? What adjustments do adults have to make as they attempt to make sense of the world and their place in it? And what role can education have in the life of the adult?

This section, therefore, addresses the issue of 'adulthood' and the difficulties of defining what it is to be 'adult', before moving on to discuss 'adult education.' Having earlier posited the notion of the multi-faceted, active and purposeful individual with the potential for learning throughout life, this section: (i) draws on relevant theories to depict suggested courses of adult life, (ii) investigates links between the development of adults and some underlying themes of adult education, and (iii) suggests the possible impact of Open Studies on personal identity

What is adulthood - and when does it begin?

Far from being a clearly defined, stable state with little additional growth or learning, adulthood can be varied, rich, complex and rewarding yet also perplexing and unsettling as new realities - such as marriage, children, employment, the process of

ageing, a growing awareness of mortality - are faced. Indeed, rather than there even being an entity such as 'adulthood' it has been suggested that ' ... adulthood is an ideal, never fully achieved'. (Rogers, 1989). The problems encountered in trying to define the concept of 'adult' have been identified by Verner (1991):

> ... the precise meaning of the term adult is actually quite vague - particularly when it is used to identify the clientele of adult education. The notions of who is an adult vary from 'those past school age' through 'grown ups' to 'mature individuals' - perceptions so indefinite as to be all but meaningless.

Adulthood, and even the concept of 'age' is specifically related to culture. In the West, age is related to number of years lived. For the Mbuti in Africa, age is not time lived, but experience gained (Turnbull, 1984). In Britain, the individual becomes an adult at the legal age of majority, that is, 18. The apparent precision of this distinctive cut-off point, however, belies its arbitrariness, for the age was lowered on January 1, 1971 by three years. And as Sugarman (1990;101) asks:

> ... did this mean there was a cohort of individuals aged 18, 19 and 20 who overnight became more grown-up - more adult? Of course not. There remain many individuals over even the age of 21 who would not be considered adult in their behaviour.

In a similar vein, Candy (1991) points out that studies have variously cited 16, 18 or 21 as the 'magic age' based on laws that allow the 'adult' to vote, drink, drive or be drafted into the armed services. Yet he shows how age alone can be a poor indicator of adult status:

> ... the eldest child who, orphaned at age fifteen, becomes responsible for her or his younger brothers and sisters or, at the other extreme, the twenty-five-year-old student who, still living at home, is protected from life's vicissitudes by his or her doting parents (ibid; 45).

This highlights the fact that not only are the apparently precise age-related definitions of adulthood wholly arbitrary, but they also omit important considerations such as the physical, emotional, psychological and even spiritual maturity of the individual. People do not always feel the age they are. They do not necessarily consider themselves to be 'grown-up' once a certain point is reached:

> When I was 15, I thought 22 was grown up ... I thought when I reached that age, that would be it. I'd be an adult; I'd really be grown up. When I got there, it wasn't how I thought it would be. I realised there was a long way to go. I didn't feel grown-up at all. (Male student, mid-30s).

There can be a discrepancy between physical change and psychological or emotional states, for instance:

> I see my body changing and can't do as much as I used to, but inside I don't feel any older. (Female, 50s).

> My friend said she can't relate to being 40. She still feels 18. I think you feel the same at any age. I don't think of myself as 61. I feel much younger. (Female).

Despite the 'legal age of majority', Squires (1993) observes that there is no single point, in a modern industrialised society, at which a person ' ... suddenly and unambiguously becomes an adult'. (87). In the United Kingdom, becoming an adult:

> ... is a process which is often thought to begin at the age of 16 with the termination of compulsory pupil status, and to be complete by the age of 21, with the attainment of full adult rights, roles, and responsibilities.

And, of course, ' ... the social and psychological processes of maturation may vary greatly from one individual to another' (ibid). Even more ambiguity arises if 'adult' is defined in terms of where different types of education begin and end:

> In educational terms, the definiton of 'adult' tends to come later rather than earlier, primarily because there is already distinct provision for 16- to 19-year-olds and for some 18- to 21-year-olds in higher education. Adult education is therefore often thought to begin where these end ... Some institutions even use the age 25 to distinguish between ordinary and 'mature' students (ibid).

Candy (1991) observes that despite the vast amount of research ' ... there are still few, if any, satisfactory and comprehensive conceptualizations of adulthood' and, drawing on a wide range of studies, speculates on the reasons why this is so:

> Perhaps it is because adulthood is a residual concept, what is left after defining other stages in the human life cycle ... Perhaps it is because adulthood is such a broad, amorphous and diffuse phenomenon ... age has proved to be an unsatisfactory critereon for determing the threshold of adulthood ... (ibid; 45).

Ages and stages

Despite the difficulties of identifying the nature of 'adult life' and when it begins, some theorists have constructed models of the life cycle, dividing it into different 'phases', 'stages' or even 'ages' in an attempt to identify psychological and biological progression and the changes and tasks faced at different times in life. The different stages imply more than simply a convenient division of what is essentially an ongoing process. For, as Stevens (1985; 140) observes, subjective experience does not stand still, and the movement through time and experience of different periods in life are fundamental to the individual's sense of identity:

> ... our sense of identity is rooted in a sequential narrative of experiences and events, of what has happened in the past and our expectations for the future. (ibid; 140)

Different concerns become more salient at different times of life. So 'time' and 'awareness of personal finiteness', for instance, '... may well be of more concern when most of life lies behind rather than ahead of us' (ibid). Until relatively recently, more

attention has been given to documenting changes which take place in childhood rather than in adulthood, when little change was assumed to occur once adolescence had been left behind (Stevens, 1985, 141; Sugarman, 1990).

Key theorists who have devised models of the life cycle incorporating adulthood, however, include Erikson, Levinson and Gould. These will briefly be considered here: Erikson, because of his influential work on identity and concern with the resolving of conflict or crisis as people move through their lives; Levinson and Gould because of their emphasis on the 'experience' of adulthood. This is not a detailed exposition of the differing perspectives, but simply an indication of the way in which the life-cycle has been depicted, and which yields some insight into adult experience.

Erikson divided the life-cycle into eight 'ages': (i) infancy, (ii) early childhood, (iii) play age, (iv) school age, (v) adolescence, (vi) young adulthood, (vii) maturity and (viii) old age. Each stage, according to Erikson, is characterised by a pair of alternative orientations or attitudes. Adolescence, for example is characterised by the problem of 'identity' versus 'role confusion' as the young person is confronted with with the need to make decisions about what he or she will be. In old age, there is the need to resolve the dilemma between 'integrity' and 'despair' or 'disgust' as death approaches and there is the temptation to dwell on unrealised goals and unfulfilled potentials. The conflict between each set of attitudes gives each stage its particular quality or characteristics. Successful resolution of the conflict results in an ego quality or strength. In old age, for instance, the ego quality to emerge is that of 'wisdom'. The 'ego' is defined as 'the inner synthesis which organizes experience and guides action' (Erikson, 1968; 154).

Erikson's model is dialectic, in that he conceptualizes each phase in terms of the interplay between a pair of alternative orientations or attitudes; it is epigenetic, in that

the growth of the ego involves a progressive development or unfolding, and it involves 'crisis', in that a 'decisive turn one way or another is unavoidable' at certain times of life. It is an 'integrative biopsychosocial' scheme, in that personal development '... is premised on the idea that this is intrinsically interwoven with patterns of biological functioning and social context.' (Stevens, 1985; 147). The individual, then, is regarded as moving through stages in his or her life, punctuated by moments of crisis which have to be resolved if a balance is to be achieved within any particular stage. Erikson's work has inspired much further research, and has been attractive to students because it acknowledges 'a social dimension to personality development that had been lacking in orthodox psychoanalytic theory' (Slugoski and Ginsburg, 1989; 37). However, it has been argued that Erikson's view of identity formation, in which the individual's needs and capabilities are seen to mesh with society's demands and rewards, is essentially impoverished, since 'societies are seldom so benign as to provide even a sizeable proportion of their youth with niches in the social order which are consonant with their potentials' (ibid; 37). For a great many people, the notion of a normative 'crisis' and hence identity achievement may simply not apply (ibid). For the purposes of this study, Erikson's model is helpful in drawing attention to the interaction between individual and society, to the fact that people may move through different stages in their lives and, most importantly, as a reminder that identity development is not confined to adolescence, but is a process continuing throughout adulthood.

Levinson et al (1979) share Erikson's view that the life-cycle follows a relatively ordered and predictable progression, but see it in terms of the 'seasons of a man's life' (Levinson, 1979); that is, different periods of time, each with its own characteristics and key 'life tasks'. The seasons break down into a sequence of four overlapping 'eras',

each lasting about 25 years: (i) era of childhood and adolescence, 0 - 22 years; (ii) era of early adulthood, 17 - 45 years; (iii) era of middle adulthood, 40 - 65; and (iv) era of late adulthood, 60 onwards. A pivotal concept in Levinson's scheme is the life structure, ' ... the basic pattern or design of a person's life at a given time'. There are structure-building periods, concerned with establishing life in a particular fashion and extending what has been attained. These are followed by transitional periods, in which there is a review what has gone before and 'preparation' for what is to come. There are early adult, mid-life and late-adult transitions.

At around 40, argues Levinson, crucial development occurs, when early adulthood is coming to an end and a new season begins to make itself felt. This 'new season' brings with it a growing awareness of mortality. For Levinson, personal growth is intrinsically related to separation; that is, in order to grow, some kind of separation is required. The person who goes through the mid-life transition with the minimum of discomfort, for example, 'may be denying that his life may change':

> Dealing with his mortality means that a man must engage in mourning for the dying self of youth, so that the self can be made more whole. To do this, he must experience some degree of crisis and despair. (Levinson, 1979;26).

If the conditions for development are 'reasonably favourable', however, the recognition of vulnerability in the person 'becomes a source of wisdom, empathy and compassion' for others and that middle adulthood can be an era of personal fulfilment and social contribution. (ibid; 30)

Levinson's research was based on the life stories of 40 employed men aged between 35 and 45 in 1968. Generalizations from this study, then, cannot simply be applied to other populations in a different time and culture, especially when that population is

mainly women, as is the case with the Open Studies students in this research. What Levinson does indicate, however, as with Erikson, is the notion of change throughout life and the transitions from one stage to the next.

Gould (1980) sees adulthood as a dynamic and changing time during which the adult must be released from 'internal constraints' if an unfolding, creative life is to be achieved. These constraints originate in the internal standards of childhood instilled by home and school. For Gould, the '... thrust of adult development is towards a realization and acceptance of ourselves as creators of our own lives and away from the assumption that the rules and standards of childhood determine our destiny' (Sugarman, 1990; 118). This evolution of 'adult consciousness' involves correcting the 'false assumptions' carried over from childhood and which sustain an illusion of safety:

> ... a fixture of childhood encompassing belief in omnipotent thought omnipotent protective parents, the absoluteness of parental rules and world view, and a whole system of defenses as controlling structures against a rage reaction to separation (Gould, 1980; 65).

Gould sees adult life in terms of four main stages: late teens, early 20s; 20s; late 20s, early 30s and 35 - 50. The false assumptions, which have to be overcome at these 'stages' include 'I will always belong to my parents and believe in their world' (late teens, early 20s), and 'Life is simple and controllable. There are no significant coexisting, contradictory forces within me' (late 20s early 30s).

So how does it feel to be middle-aged?

Open Studies students have indicated that as well as having difficulty determining what a particular chronological age is supposed to 'feel' like, they are unable to categorise themselves more broadly as being at a particular 'stage' of life. This prompts questions

about when certain periods of life begin or end. At an Open Studies seminar at Warwick University, a group of about 30 male and female students was asked to define middle age. A variety of answers was given, ranging from emotional feeling about having lived a number of years to specifiying particular periods of time, say from mid-40s to mid-to-late 50s (although these varied, too). But a clear, conclusive definition ultimately eluded the audience. This would lend partial support to Levinson's (1979; x) contention that:

> Middle age is usually regarded as a vague interim period, defined primarily in negative terms. One is no longer young, but not quite old - but what is one in a more positive sense?

A leading politician has described middle age in positive terms, and the effect of feeling both younger than he is, and of middle-age seeming to slide further back as he gets older.

> Middle age was about 30, then 40, then 50. I see it receding into the distance until about 80 ... I feel about 19. I think this is the experience of a lot of people who are reasonably fit. (Kinnock, 1994).

Potter (1994) remarks that age is something that cannot be prepared for:

> ... you reach 40s, your 40s or middle age and nobody ever tells you, nobody's ever told you, you know, what it's like ...

Although for the Open Studies students middle-age did appear to a 'vague interim period', it was not seen in particularly negative terms. Some spoke about the continuing interest - and ability - to learn, about facing new challenges, of changing, yet rewarding, views on life, on the value of being able to draw on experience.

If defining the beginning of adulthood is arbitrary, and middle age is a vague concept, meaning different things to different people (Bromley, 1988; 158), then attempting to define the 'duration' of adulthood, and the implication that there is something beyond adulthood (a post-adult stage?) is even more problematic. Is there an upper age limit, as some authors imply? Dewald (1980; 35) sees the phase of adulthood as covering ' ... the timespan between the emergence of the individual from adolescence to the onset of senescence and the advanced ageing process'. In Western civilization ' ... this usually covers the era between 21 and 70'. With increasing longevity, however, 70 might seem a rather early and, once again, arbitrary cut-off age. There is much evidence to suggest that an active, creative and fulfilling adulthood does not automatically 'end' at 70. Sugarman (1990) observes that a problem in using chronological age as a criterion for adulthood 'stems from the enormous individual differences in physical, psychological and social functioning that prevail during the 60s and 70s ... People in their 80s might, with some justification, object to being thought of as no longer adult'. (ibid; 101).

Chronological age roughly indicates the 'combination of physiological, physical and mental functioning' (ibid). Yet while there will broad differences between 'young' and 'old', there will also be an infinite variety of individual differences within any one age group, making problematic any generalisations on the basis of a specific 'age' .

> ... the multiplicity of possible explanations for individual age-related differences ... mitigate against the use of such criteria for adult status. (ibid; 102).

Physical maturity can be attained at a relatively young age, whereas other forms of maturity develop over longer period of time, perhaps well into adulthood.

Kroll (1988; 12) observes:

> When, somewhere between sixteen and twenty-five years of age, young people become "grown up" I know I am really referring to the fact that they have stopped growing taller rather than to their girth or state of maturity. Most people gain physical maturity when they stop growing taller, but few could be described as emotionally or spiritually mature. Those kinds of maturity are forged during the years of adult life as people adapt to the circumstances of their individual lives.

Kroll further points out that although physical changes continue throughout life and are obvious to all as people become older, they happen to different people at different rates: 'chronological age is no measure of real age'. (ibid; 12). This echoes Khan's (1971; 200) assertion that individuals may get their concept of their status as adults at different stages of their biological and social development.

Dictionary definitions of 'adult' emphasise 'maturity'. Stated so baldly, however, the notion of 'maturity' is open to a range of interpretations, and the definition becomes as vague as the legal definition is precise, with both omitting important aspects of what being adult means.

Perceptions of what it is to be 'an adult' are relevant in adult education, however; both in terms of the tutor facing a group of students of varying backgrounds, experience and degrees of maturity and the institutions providing the courses that adults wish to attend. If adults are perceived as 'having reached maturity' or 'fully developed', what are the implications for the educators? If adults are regarded as already having reached maturity, then questions arise about what potential remains for further development and what form of education would be appropriate.

Even more importantly, if age and growth are seen as a contradiction in terms, as the eminent contemporary Behavioural psychologist B.F.Skinner contends (Friedan, 1994; xxiii), how are tutors to perceive the abilities and potential for development -

and growth - of the adults they work with? This forms one of the underlying themes of the study.

For the moment, to draw this section to a conclusion, it is perhaps helpful to see adulthood as a 'process' rather than simply a 'product', a cluster of concepts rather than an 'entity', with adults in a perpetual 'dialectic' not just between themselves as individuals and the environment they inhabit, but also between 'continuity' and 'change' within themselves, as they continue to face ever-changing circumstances. One way of defining adulthood is through recognition of social roles. But this approach tends to have a 'disconcerting tendency towards circularity' (Candy, 1991: 45). As Darkenwald and Merriam (1982: 77) put it:

> The adult ... can be distinguished from a child or adolescent by his or her acceptance of the social roles and functions that define adulthood.

Rogers (1989; 5-6), in fact, suggests that the term 'adult' does not refer to a single entity at all, but rather a range of concepts. These, he suggests, include:

* a stage in the lifecycle of the individual, progressing through childhood and youth and into adulthood;
* a status, by which an individual is accepted by society as having 'completed his or her novitiate and is now incorporated fully into the community;
* a sub-set, which distinguishes adults from children;
* a set of ideals and values. Characteristics associated with adulthood include far-sightedness, self-control, established (and usually accepted) values, experience and autonomy.

Three main clusters of ideas that Rogers identifies as being within any view of adulthood are the sense of being ' fully grown' or 'mature'; of having a greater sense of 'perspective'; and of developing a sense of 'autonomy'. In contrast to the view that sees adults as being fully mature - in the sense of having mature and stable cognitive structures - Rogers argues that maturity is not just a state (although the characteristics of a mature person can be recognised) but also ' ... an ideal to be aimed at rather than achieved in full'. He adds that:

> ... the process of moving towards greater maturity is one we all acknowledge as being associated with adulthood. (ibid; 6).

It is assumed that educative programmes such as Open Studies assists the process of moving towards 'greater maturity' and that this in itself embodies ever-inclusive perspectives, contributing, among others things, to the individual's sense of identity. Some of the issues revolving around adult education will now be addressed.

3. Adult education: critical opportunity in a theoretical jungle

If it is difficult to define adulthood, as was indicated in the previous section, then it becomes even more problematic to discuss precisely the phenomenon of adults continuing their learning either in everyday life or in a more formal educational context such as that of Open Studies, since there is no single, coherent 'theory' of learning that can simply be applied to adults. From the practitioner's point of view, the profusion of perspectives within adult education creates what could be seen as a theoretical jungle; yet within that 'jungle', there lies a critical opportunity for adults. Critical because it provides an opportunity to continue their education throughout life, and possibly open up previously unattainable horizons; the Open Studies programme, for example, improves access to existing and new degree courses. Critical, too, because in a rapidly changing world, education cannot be a 'once-only' phenomenon. Learning (the *process* of adaptation and change), must continue throughout life, supported periodically by education (the deliberate and formalised *institutionalization* of the learning process) (Duke, 1994). And finally, 'critical' because of the potential of education not only to support but to enable adults to become 'critically aware' and in doing so make finer 'discriminations' in their lives, helping to broaden and transform their lives and perspectives (Chickering and Reisser, 1993), raising awareness of themselves and others; this is an important point in relation to how people perceive themselves, since 'learning and personhood are inextricably intertwined' (Jarvis, 1987; 37). In order to set the experience of adults on the Open Studies courses into the broader 'adult education' context, this section attempts to outline the theoretical complexities and continuing 'epistemological debates' within the field.

Defining the field

Even before examining the experience of adults, there are the numerous theoretical perspectives and terminological confusions within the field to contend with. There is debate, for example, over the difference, if any, between 'adult education' and the 'education of adults'. One view is that 'adult education' is equivalent to 'the education of adults'. From this standpoint, adult education is defined ' ... primarily in operational (rather than intrinsic) terms ... as the provision of opportunities for adults to acquire skills and knowledge in a systematic, purposeful manner' (Brookfield, 1983). This has appeal because of its wide-ranging and democratic associations:

> It is a generous, broad and all-encompassing concept of educational provision. It allows for flexibility in terms of format and setting, and is sufficiently generic to include activities as diverse as military education, training in business and industry, adult basic education, recreational programmes, liberal arts discussion groups, and community action initiatives. (Brookfield, 1983; 143).

An alternative is that practice is based on notions of 'adultness'. From this perspective, it is assumed that if the essential characteristics of adulthood can be defined, particularly in terms of how adults and children differ, and the unique roles adults play in society, then ' ... we can derive the essential nature of adult education from a consideration of these characteristics' (ibid). From this analysis, it is argued, ' ... will come a specification of the curriculum, methods and purposes of adult education' and there will be a constant expansion of experience in 'desirable directions'. Such directions would be '... to increase knowledge in general, to develop intellectual skills, and to increase aesthetic and spiritual sensibility' (ibid.). One implication of the view

that adults are 'distinct' from children is the search for correspondingly distinct methods of 'teaching' adults, as exemplified in Knowles's (1970, 1984) attempts to establish 'andragogy' as the 'art and science of helping adults learn'. In his discussion of self-directed learning, Candy (1991) draws attention to the fact that attempts to establish a *distinctive* theoretical framework for adult education have rested on assumptions about adults (and that there are forms of knowledge which are 'adult') and the persistent myth that 'children must be taught, whereas adults can learn for themselves'. He observes:

> ... these features do not have to be demonstrably true for them to function as tacit justification for the promotion of self-direction by adult educators. (44)

The term 'post-initial education' has been used to describe adult education, and encompassing as it does a broader notion of educational activity, is regarded by some as more convenient than such administrative divisions as 'compulsory' and 'post-compulsory' schooling. The Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education (ACACE), for instance, reports that:

> The initial education stage would obviously include going to school, including nursery school, but it could go on full- or part-time into the mid-20s. After compulsory schooling, initial education takes a wide variety of forms: full-time study in sixth-form, university, college, polytechnic, medical school, military academy and so on; part-time day release; evening classes and correspondence courses; on-the-job training in the factory.

Although this distinction raises its own set of problems - including the fact that in some cultures people may receive no 'initial' education at all and in the West the

distinction between initial and adult education is not always straightforward (Rogers, 1989: 4) - it does convey the idea of adults continuing or 'returning' to some kind of education later in their lives; although once again, care should be taken not to associate what is a helpful 'administrative expediency' with the theory of developmental psychology (Osborn et al, 1982: 4). It also points to two principles espoused in the ACACE report, which are that:

> All adults should be entitled to continued opportunities for education throughout their lives.

and that:

> The education of adults should be given increased priority in the allocation of resources.

In an attempt to determine the nature of adult education, several terms have emerged identifying different concepts within the field. Key concepts are:

Continuing education - which emphasizes the 'unity of the concept of education, both child and adult, and indicates that it continues throughout life (Rogers, 1989: 1). A narrower connotation has been that it is 'education for adults normally resumed after a break or interruption often involving a period in employment' (Venables, 1976: 9). Flude and Parrott (1979: 16) suggest it might be more usefully confined to the immediate post-school education of young people, before the start of 'recurring opportunities' envisaged for adults.

Recurrent education - which projects a more overtly political character and embodies the notion of social justice. It has been linked with numerous terms implying social reform, such as participation in planning, links between education and work and between younger and older generations (Tennant, 1988: 46). It has been referred to as ' a revolution' (Houghton and Richardson, 1974) and is concerned with the rights of people to take up full-time education at a time in their lives which suits them best, and which enables them to keep up with rapid social change. (Jarvis, 1986: 5). This means allowing the alternation of periods of structured educational experience with work, leisure and retirement (Flude and Parrott, 1979:13).

Lifelong education (as a translation of the French *education permanent*) - is regarded as any planned series of incidents directed towards learning and understanding throughout the lifespan (Jarvis, 1986). It ' ... provides individuals and societies with opportunities not only to adapt to change but also to participate in change and to innovate' (UNESCO, 1976). The goal of lifelong education is to maintain and improve the quality of life, with more 'peaceful and just' international relations (Gelpi, 1985: 1), and its ideal is to be 'freely accessible to all people at all ages and stages throughout life' (Ireland, 1978: xix). Jarvis (1986; 1990) also adds:

Continuous education - a non-formal approach occurring in the context of work experience rather than in a formal educational setting. It is therefore a 'non-formal approach to education provision, employing distance teaching techniques and seeking to assist professional practitioners learn "on the job".

The differing interpretations of the 'education of adults' all offer different ways of dealing with questions about 'meaning and purpose as well as specific issues of policy and practice' (Elsey, 1986: 6). This study itself falls within the remit of Warwick University's continuing education department, and so is located within the 'continuing education' domain, although in broader terms it follows Duke's (1988) contention that 'continuing education' and 'adult education' are synonymous:

> As far as I'm concerned, they're simply interchangeable, very broad, generic terms for the whole process of the education of adults in some deliberate sense in this society.

From this point of view, the adults participating in this study are regarded not simply as 'retraining' - in the sense of adults returning to 'pick up' on their education after a break from statutory schooling, although there may well be an element of that - but also as reflecting the *ongoing* nature of learning throughout life, and the 'whole process' of the education of adults.

This process becomes even more complicated when the wide range of options for adults is examined. The Open Studies programme at Warwick University alone indicates the scope of possibilities. Courses in over 100 subjects can be offered at any one time, with actual classes reaching up to 200, ranging from local history and understanding the weather to Mozart' operas, homosexuality in English literature and an introduction to the social sciences (Open Studies, 1988/89, 1990/91a, 1992) Additions to the certificated courses have included Marine, Social, Religious, Ecology and Conservation studies. Kelly (1992), Legge (1982), Mee and Wiltshire (1978), Rogers (1984) and others have also indicated the variety of activities falling under the

umbrella of 'adult education'. In his study of adult education in Britain, for instance, Legge covers work-related studies, residential and quasi-residential education (colleges, field studies, study holidays, conferences and the like), home study, distance learning, leisure-related studies, non-formal education (including women's organisations, clubs and community associations) libraries, museums, cultural societies, community projects and much more. Squires (1993) notes that:

> It is much more difficult to specify or classify the range of provision and activity in this sector of education than in any other: indeed, it is hard to call it a sector at all (ibid; 87)

He argues that some forms of adult study and learning:

> ... go beyond not only formal education, but beyond formality, and become virtually indistinguishable from the everyday learning that characterizes, and indeed makes possible, our lives (ibid).

Spoilt for choice?

These are broad conceptions of adult learning, but it has been proposed that one of the major problems facing adults wishing to study is not that there are so few opportunities, but that there are so many (Bell and Roderick, 1982: viii). Korving (1988: 27) makes the point:

> For a large number of people, the problem is too many choices. There are great thick prospectuses, full of courses that might be suitable

Within the provision of deliberate activity, however, the Open Studies programme can be seen to fall into what Legge (1982) identifies as fairly formalized teaching and

learning, characterized by the part-time evening class (or full-time course at technical college). With its implication of a teacher and a group, this is, to some:

> ... adult education *par excellence*, and perhaps it is the image most readily conjured up when the words are used. (ibid; 5).

The 'fairly formalized' arrangement is exemplified by the Open Studies certificated courses, represented in this research by Labour Studies, Women's Studies and Counselling. Certificated courses are studied over six terms (two years), and students study one unit per term (Open Studies, 1991b). Students are required to read 'set books' or 'indicative reading' (e.g., on the Women's Studies, the literature included Rowbottom 1973; Strachey, 1978; Davidhoff and Hall, 1987; Oakley, 1974; Penfold and Walker, 1983 and Eisenstein, 1984), write essays of up to 2,000 words and complete projects, which in some cases includes taped interviews. The courses are structured to ensure coverage of what is regarded as the appropriate material. Modules in the Women's Studies, for example, include 'Women's Work and the Family', 'Women Writing and Writing About Women' and 'Women and Mental Health'. Objectives include introducing students to work on women's history, and equip them '... with the study skills necessary to approach a further course of study' (T. Lovell, 1988). Teaching is through a mixture of discussions and lectures. The certificated courses, therefore, are carefully planned programmes of study leading to accreditation, which carries exemption from one first-level part-time degree module on selected degree programmes. They aim to teach skills as well as knowledge and are ' ... particularly suitable for people who have been out of full-time education for some time, and who may feel they have lost confidence in their study skills' (Open Studies,

1991b). It is argued here that this structured learning, because it progresses in a cumulative fashion, with new information being added to that already acquired - in other words, the students gradually assimilate new concepts and experiences as they move through the course - contributes to the students' 'critical awareness' and so facilitates shifts in perspective. These shifts, or in Mezirow's terminology, transformations, are assumed to impact upon the students' sense of identity to the extent that the altered perspectives will alter the individuals' view of themselves and their relation to others. This also relates to the realisation of potential, and the assumption that adults are able to continue learning throughout life.

Utopian view?

In Western liberal adult education there has always been a concern for promoting personal development (Moore, 1993) and the encouragement of learning which is valued for its own sake (Hostler, 1981, 24; Tuijnam, 1990, 284). Indeed, its history - the philosophical and educational assumptions of which can be traced back to Aristotle, who conceived of the process of growth as the progressive realisation of potential (Hostler, 1981; 25) - is one of Utopian thinking (Field, 1989); that is, liberal education itself is regarded as a 'forward-looking process', embodying the notion that individuals can continue to learn and 'realise their potential'. The concept of 'potential' is itself contentious, but for the moment it will be regarded as incorporating qualities such as the increasing ability to reflect critically on circumstances and experience, to learn from that experience, to solve problems more effectively, to reassess previous assumptions and to assimilate the revised thinking into new 'realities' and new ways of seeing and understanding, so gaining insight into one's own and other people's thinking

and behaviour. The assumption is that the process of learning, of being able to realise potential, in principle continues throughout life. This view reflects the strong underlying assumption within liberal education that there will be a future and that education can have an effect on that future; in fact, that it helps to make 'better human beings' (Field, 1989). In terms of post-school education for adults, the idea of 'better' human beings has been taken as more than simply an increase in the stock of an individual's knowledge. It means raising us ' ... to a higher and better state than we have known before' (Hostler; 1981; 4).

In continuing education this does not simply mean personal development in a liberal, non-vocational sense - but also 'instrumental' education for social purpose such as citizenship or social change. On the one hand, education is seen as impacting not just on the individual, but also on the community at large; it is seen as providing the knowledge, skills, awareness and understanding (NIACE, 1990) which enable individuals to participate fully in, and even change, society. Adult educators, in fact, have long held that their teaching should have a political purpose (Simon, 1990). Mansbridge (1944; 2), for example, claimed that education for voters 'will inevitably bring about right and sound action on municipal, national and imperial affairs.' On the other hand, at the individual level, education is assumed to bring about personal development and growth and the gradual unfolding of potential.

The distinction between 'instrumental' education, as a means to an end, and 'liberal' education, which is seen as worthwhile in its own right, is not as clear cut as it might appear, however. Both approaches embody the notion of students being 'improved' in some way, and of adult education playing an important role in helping people to become better informed, more active and involved human beings, either

being better able to adapt to change (Elsdon, 1975) or even control it (Pilley, 1990). Through education, people can become ' ... producers of change rather than consumers, agents rather than victims' (Pilley, 1990; 1); they become empowered to bring about that change, 'not just to survive but to shape and control their lives' (Flude and Parrott, 1979; 1). Stated even more assertively, continuing education becomes a 'tool for survival', enabling people to understand and manage the development of society and saving the world from being swept to destruction on a tide of change (Rogers and Groombridge, 1976). This view, combining the idea of benefit to both individual and society, is buttressed by the contention that educational participation by adults is both necessary and possible:

> It is necessary because we are an underachieving society, and this is damaging to individual self-esteem, constructive social relationships and prosperous economic development. It is possible not in any great leap, but through steady and consistent progress (Woodley et al, 1987).

Theoretical confusion.

Yet although premised on what appear to be the essentially unproblematic notions of 'personal development' and 'knowledge for its own sake' liberal education has generated over the years a ' ... multitude of theoretical confusions and obscurities' (Hostler, 1981; 24). This in itself has become a matter of continuing debate as adult education wrestles to establish an identity for itself in the face of epistemological uncertainty (Bright, 1987). Percy (1982) highlights these ambiguities

> ... we seem to know little for certain about the role of adult education in our current society and about the extent of adult involvement in learning activities. Moreover, we have not explored satisfactorily the basic issues of what kinds of adult learning we regard as 'worthwhile'

> and as contributing to an individual's quality of life ... (51)

Up to now, the continuing development and potential to learn in adulthood has been assumed. The next section looks at the work conducted by cognitive psychologists into development in adults, which tends to support the notion of continued cognitive growth, and also at the related process of learning itself, which can generate 'cognitive dissonance' - or a mismatch between previous experience and new learning - and a sense of 'disjunction', or unease, before finally assimilating new information.

One of the themes of this thesis is the development of critical awareness, both in terms of the individual students and the insights they may or may not gain over the period of their studies, and in terms of practitioners, and their need to be aware of the complexities of the field in which they are working in order to deepen their understanding. This requires questioning assumptions about adults and the process of adult education. But although the 'questioning of assumptions' may seem an obvious activity for adult educators, it appears that it is not. In calling for greater understanding of the diverse theoretical concepts underpinning adult education, theorists recognize a reluctance to confront the issues:

> ... many of those who see themselves as practitioners do not allow theoretical or philosophical speculation to muddy the apparently clear waters of practice in which they swim. (Brookfield 1987; 206),

Groombridge (1983) points to the difficulty of conceptualising adult education when he reports that the literature abounds in attempts to define it and that 'thinking systematically about adult education can be trying to build with wet soap'. Elsey (1986) argues that although some in adult education feel there is little call for the

abstract generalisation of theory, it *should* (emphasis added) be related to practice ' ... if only because it provides scope for intelligent discussion about purposes, efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of adult education', while Tennant (1988) points to the value of at least some grounding in psychology, one of adult education's 'foundation' disciplines. In the absence of an agreed theoretical base for adult education *per se*, the term 'foundation' is used to denote those 'disciplines' which contribute to the practice of adult education. These include history, economics, sociology, psychology and philosophy. Two uses of the term 'foundation' in relation to adult education have been identified. In one sense, the discipline constitutes a 'base' or 'source' of knowledge, that:

> ... has a clear, supporting superstructure of practice. Since disciplines are a foundation, this implies that the knowledge base is secure and reliable as a consistent evidential feature (Usher and Bryant, 1989: 41).

The second sense, however, refers to the place of 'foundation' disciplines within a 'field of knowledge'. This is:

> ... a composite of disciplines integrated around a particular theoretical or practical orientation (ibid).

In this sense, 'foundation disciplines' refer to the constituents of the field. One problem is that adult education is difficult to categorize and unsure of its status:

> It has tried to become a <u>theoretical</u> field of knowledge, but whether it is that or a <u>practical</u> field or neither is a matter of contention (ibid).

This is further complicated by the fact that the foundation disciplines themselves may not be as reliable and securely-based as it is assumed. Psychology, itself, for example, is not one but many *psychologies* '... each with its own often radically different paradigm' (ibid: 44). Even so, as a discipline, it does seem to occupy a particular position in the field of adult education, since theories of adult learning and development are, in the final analysis, *psychological* theories (ibid: 174). This study, however, has avoided an overly-psychological, mainstream perspective, with its emphasis on experimentation and quantification - and the corresponding implication of a definable and statistically verifiable 'truth' - and has attempted to take into account biography, social relationships and the interactive context of the learner (Salmon, 1985). To this end, it has drawn pluralistically from psychological, philosophical, sociological and educational perspectives in its representation of adult experience. It is argued that insights derived from each contribute to a fuller picture of the individual in the learning environment.

Through the adult educator's questioning of assumptions, or critical reflection, the possibility evolves of raising awareness of the issues and moving to a more comprehensive level of understanding. For it is through a critical reflection that the practitioner:

> ... brings to the surface the implicit and tacit knowledge in the action which is then integrated with the action and its outcome (Usher and Bryant, 1989; 81).

Through this 'reflection-in-action' as Schon (1983) would call it:

> ... new knowledge is constantly being generated. It builds up into a situational repertoire allowing the practitioner to cope with the different kinds of problematic situations; the repertoire enables the new and unfamiliar to be related to the similar but different situations successfully handled in the past, (Usher and Bryant, 1989; 81).

The practitioner, then, can extend knowledge and understanding in the process of reflecting upon actions taken. A further consequence of this critical reflectivity is that 'not only can we think of our own personal world ... we can also think of someone else's world as if it were our own. In other words, we have the capacity for empathy - for putting ourselves in other people's shoes' (Stevens, 1985; 38). If practitioners are able to put themselves in other people's shoes, and understand that other people's worlds may be different from their own, then the potential for more sensitive social interaction and facilitation of learning increases; it is the emphasis Rogers (1951) adopts when he argues that to understand people it is necessary to understand how they view themselves and the world around them (Barnes, 1982b; 50). Tennant (1988) makes a similar observation:

> By scrutinising their psychological 'world views' practitioners are better able to recognise and appreciate the world views of others and they are in a better position to articulate their goals as adult educators (158).

Even without scaling the dizzy heights of 'world views', the need to reflect upon practice is evident, even at the point of planning lessons. As Hostler (1981; 3) remarks:

> Some tutors never seem to get around to the stage of working out a detailed syllabus; they muddle along from week to week with the haziest of outlines.

This detracts from the effectiveness of adult education:

> If the tutor does not know what he is aiming at, his students can scarcely be expected to (ibid).

Such 'haziness' is not simply failing to deliver a quality service, but is also neglecting both the valuable experience of adults - they will bring their own expectations and standards into a classroom - and the potential for further development. For adults are not simply passive receivers of information; they also initiate, interpret and contribute towards the construction of knowledge. Practitioners need to reflect upon how they can best 'increase participation and facilitate learning' (Cross, 1981). The Russell (1972) report argued that ' . . . it would be surprising if individual development were completed and curiosity satisfied by the age of sixteen or even twenty-two'. That there is continuing cognitive growth and potential for development in adulthood is born out by research in cognitive psychology, which provides the focus of the next section.

CHAPTER 2

4. Beyond Formal Operations: a continuing development

The previous sections explored the concept of 'adult' and some of the assumptions underlying adult education. It was largely from a social psychological and educational viewpoint. Some reference was made to cognitive processes. Being unobservable, these processes can only be speculated upon; inferences about cognitive abilities can be drawn from behavioural observations. Nevertheless, there is important debate over the cognitive abilities of adults and the relative skills, knowledge and the nature of development and change in adulthood. Some regard cognitive structures to have reached full maturity by around adolescence, referred to by Piaget as the 'formal operational stage'. This is the 'stability' model, in which the cognitive processes during childhood are assumed to result in:

> ... the attainment of mature forms of reasoning and thinking which are then applied throughout the adult years (Tennant, 1988: 66).

Others believe there is a decline in cognitive ability as the individual grows older. This is the 'decrement' model, in which it is felt that:

> ... there is a gradual decrease in the ageing individual's capacity to utilise and organise information, presumably the result of some kind of biological deterioration (ibid).

A third viewpoint holds that there is some decline, but that this is compensated for through 'experience'. This is the 'decrement with compensation' model which:

> ... accepts the notion of biological deterioration, but also emphasizes the compensatory effects of accumulated experience during adult life (ibid).

Students interviewed for this research tended to feel not so much that their cognitive abilities were in decline, but that they simply had 'more on their minds' to cope with, and so it took more effort to 'think of everything'. It could be speculated that this in itself reflects the nature of postformal thought, where the individual is faced with choosing between competing perspectives or epistemological frameworks (Benack, 1984). If each 'thing' on the individual's mind is thought of as a 'system' or 'epistemological framework' in its own right, then the choice is between whole (and inter-relating) systems, not simply individual, logical propositions, as in formal operations. Being able to manipulate and compare whole systems, a 'metasystematic' process, has been identified as characteristic of postformal thinking (Basseches, 1984). Generally speaking, cognitive theories of learning emphasize the active engagement of the mind in relation to what is being learned, and stress the processes involved in ' ... creating responses, the organization of perceptions that goes on in the mind, the development of insights' (Rogers, 1989: 47). In order to learn, 'understanding is necessary', where 'understanding' is taken to refer to knowing or comprehending the 'nature' or 'meaning' of something; for understanding is not just the acquisition of new information, but ' ... also involves the use of this information to revise existing ideas and develop an improved perspective on the subject at hand' (Taylor, 1983; 77).

This study integrates perspectives from both social and cognitive psychology in its depiction of the individual, and in this section draws upon cognitive developmental psychology to examine what has been referred to as the 'post-formal' world of the adult. This is a challenging concept, since if Piaget's 'formal operations' stage is

regarded as the expression of mature cognitive development, then the suggestion that there is possibly change and development beyond this raises questions about the quality and nature of adult thought, the continuing potential to learn throughout life and the significance of the interaction between the individual and his or her social context. Given the underlying assumptions of this study, that learning, socialization and questions of identity are lifelong and related processes, this section aims to provide insights into the cognitive as well as social processes in adulthood, and provides a bridge between the notion of the 'adult' in 'adult education' and the next section on adult identity.

Piaget argues that by the formal operational stage the child's thinking is like that of an adult's. It can now handle abstract logic, develop hypotheses about the world and test them out as a scientist might, and use abstract concepts in its thinking (Hayes and Orrell, 1987). In other words, the term 'formal operations' implies that by adolescence, the individual has a number of high-level cognitive capacities and can ' ... reflect, analyze, form concepts at a high level of abstraction, philosophize, and can think about thinking' (Bruno, 1983; 167). For Piaget, this is the highest form of thought and ' . . . there is no further structural change after the attainment of formal operations' (Tennant, 1988; 79).

Piagetian theory, however, has been the subject of serious criticism on conceptual and methodological grounds (ibid; 78; Broughton, 1984). On the one hand, there is the question of universality. Most research has concentrated on the earlier Piagetian stage of concrete operations. Cross-cultural studies reveal that some subjects attain this stage; but that there are considerable differences in the age and proportion of those who do so. Dasen (1972) reports that some children, and even adults, never reach the

concrete operational stage. On the other hand, it is not just a question of whether the stages are universal, but also the nature and 'quality' of thought. In Western cultures the content and sequence of development appears to be the same, although the rate of development - the age at which Piagetian stages are attained - may differ (Woolfson, 1981; 44). Bruno (1983) remarks that: ' ... human beings make it to the stage of formal operations in varying degrees. Many of us carry forward into adult life a substantial number of the ways of thought common to the preoperational child'. He makes the further observation that ' ... it is not unusual to find adults who try to cope with their problems with the outmoded mental tools of children.' So the presumed attainment of formal operational thinking in early adulthood as the inevitable culmination of a 'neat' and fairly clearly defined sequence of biological stages can be questioned on at least two counts: one is on the idea of universality, and cross-cultural studies have demonstrated that not everyone does reach the formal operational stage; and the other is on the notion of different *kinds* or *qualities* of thinking: on the one hand, some adults may continue to think in 'childish' or - in the Piagetian scheme - immature ways; on the other hand, it has been argued there are actually different styles of thinking which fall outside the Piagetian structure altogether, and that the notion of formal operations is, in fact, 'too limited to capture the richness of adolescent and adult thought'. On this point, for example, Commons et al (1984) argue that:

> Kinds of thinking exist that do not show the logical structure of formal operations or lower stages. These kinds of thinking might develop parallel to formal operations and supplement them, being used in areas not amenable to the logic of propositions. They might also develop after formal operations and replace them, being used in the same areas as formal operations. In either case, the argument is that an adequate understanding cannot be based solely on Piaget's model of formal operations (xv).

They further point out that the overriding conclusion following examinations by a number of writers is that 'there is a great deal of developmental potential beyond formal operations. More sophisticated thinking can be found and described in models collectively labelled 'postformal' (xv).

Two methods of exploring these notions of postformal cognitive development are:

> i) to locate limitations in formal operations, then to describe a kind of thinking that enables the individual to transcend those limitations (xv) and
>
> ii) to analyse the nature of the developmental process, rather than the limitations inherent in formal operations. This approach attempts to show not that change *does* occur, but *how* it occurs (xvi).

One theorist critically working within the Piagetian framework and reflecting the first approach is Pascual-Leone (1984). He describes ways in which there is a breakdown in certain areas of the cognitive structure. But this is compensated for by adaptation, and new growth, in other areas. This can be seen as the 'decrement with compensation' model and points to the limitations of Piaget's post-formal structure, since if this is the fully-mature 'end-point' of cognitive development, then the implication is that there is no potential for further development.

Pascual-Leone describes the mechanisms of breakdown and compensation in terms of 'information-carrying processes' or 'operators'. In this model, there are two types of operator: *subjective* and *silent.* The 'subjective operators' or "information carrying functional units", are referred to as the *qualitative-structural* aspects of the organism. They are responsible for constructing the world of outer or inner experience and, in effect, forming 'a blueprint for action or anticipatory action'. These are the operators used in the construction of mental representations of the environment. In other words,

they can be seen as situation-specific, contributing towards a *subjective interpretation* of experience.

The deeper-level, universal (situation-free) 'silent operators', are regarded as *quantitative-dynamic* processes. According to Pascual-Leone, these contribute to the emergence of stages. The individual is able to 'construct' the environment, and knowledge and understanding of it, " ... by attributing the content and/or structure of his/her information carrying processes or schemes to the environment" (182). In other words external 'reality' is perceived in terms of the internal representation. This representation, or internal model, is itself then tested against the reality. The idea of constructing mental representations is found elsewhere in cognitive psychology (Aitkenhead and Slack, 1985) and is regarded as being the 'psychological core' (Johnson-Laird, 1985) of understanding:

> ... the brain is conceived as perpetually formulating models of external reality and testing them against the information picked up by sense organs.
>
> It has been said that we have not understood something properly until we can construct something like it. (Beloff, 1975; 164).

For Piaget, the dynamics of this, the 'mental attention' model, are the efficient cause of life stages (Pascual-Leone, 1984;182). In other words, the subjective operators 'build the internal model'; but that model is built within constraints established by the silent operators, or developmental stage that the individual has reached. A child will construct internal models of the environment, for example, but there will still be a limit on the child's understanding, because he or she will only be at a certain level of development. In terms of cognitive development, if Piaget's formal operations stage is regarded as final, then there can be no further dynamic, structural changes.

Pascual-Leone, however, argues that there is a decrement, or breakdown, of the main silent operators. This functional breakdown in certain domains "disturbs adaptation and forces new selective cognitive growth." (ibid; 212). The abrupt decline of key silent operators between 40 and 45 years, for instance, is seen as a cause of the so-called mid-life crisis and "forces structural reorganisations ... personality maturation, and selective growth." (ibid; 213). From this perspective the implications for adult development are that despite a decline in certain aspects of cognitive functioning there is further structural change after the attainment of the apparent "end-state" of formal operations. This biologically-rooted structural change is seen in terms of adaptation to new circumstances. While this point of view fits into the Piagetian scheme to the extent that it acknowledges developmental stages, it also reveals the limitations of Piaget's 'final' stage because it allows for further adaptive growth. It means that while adults may 'slow down' in certain ways as they get older, they nevertheless retain the ability to learn and develop beyond the cognitive stage they reached at adolescence.

An alternative approach looks at cognitive processes in terms of 'dialectical operations'. Dialectical operations refers to the constant interaction between the changing or developing person and society (Tennant, 1988; 62). The person, in this view, 'creates and is created by the society in which he/she lives' (ibid). Dialectical thinking - or 'reasoning' - takes the Piagetian framework as a starting point but is seen to be one level of reflection removed from formal-operational thinking (Basseches, 1984; 217). In this way, it presupposes, but points to the limitations of, formal operations. On the other hand, dialectical thinking is seen as an ongoing process offering an alternative to the 'phases' and 'stages' approach altogether. Schemes such as

Piaget's, while acknowledging interaction and change, nevertheless search for stability, equilibrium and balance in the life course. In contrast, because the individual is construed as ' a changing person in a changing world' (Tennant 1988; 62), dialectical thinking 'is very much concerned with the dynamics of change' (ibid).

In Piaget's framework, the concept of equilibration establishes a relationship between the processes of assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the process by which an individual behaves towards the environment through the application of already existing schemas. It is the tendency to distort or alter encounters with new objects and experiences so that they fit within our existing understanding of the world. Accommodation is the tendency to alter our cognitive structures to fit the objects we encounter (Tennant, 1988; 75). Equilibration is the process that always leads the individual towards a state of equilibrium in the interactions of assimilation and accommodation (Oates and Floyd, 1979).

Structures of equilibrium allow the process of extension and change to occur while keeping something constant (Basseches, 1984; 229). Basseches argues that dialectical thinking reflects a fundamentally different form of equilibrium from the equilibrium produced by formal thought. He argues that for Piaget, a cognitive system in equilibrium is one with the capacity to remain the same system, with the same laws of operation, as those laws are applied to a varied environment. Piaget reserves the term 'structure' for closed-systems that have this property (ibid; 229). In contrast, a dialectic:

> ... is a system that changes in fundamental and irreversible ways over time as a result of dynamic relationships within the system and its context. More becomes incorporated into the system as the system evolves.
> (Basseches, 1984; 229).

Thus:

> ... a dialectic is not a structure in the traditional Piagetian sense, nor is thought organised by the concept of a dialectic a Piagetian structure. Nevertheless, there is a form of equilibrium in dialectical thinking. (ibid; 229).

Basseches discusses dialectical thinking as a metasystematic form of cognitive organisation. Metasystematic thinking:

> ... includes systems among its objects of analysis and describes relationships among transformations of entire systems. It is one level of reflection removed from formal-operational thinking that takes propositions as objects of analysis and transformations of propositions into implicit structured wholes or systems. (ibid; 217).

The organising principle in the case of dialectical thinking is the concept of the dialectic. For Basseches, 'dialectic' refers to:

> ... the processes by which structured wholes, forms or systems, evolve and change. Dialectic may be defined as developmental transformation, developmental movement through forms, which occurs via constitutive and interactive relationships. (Basseches, 1984; 217).

Sinnott (1984) regards this metatheoretical level, in which whole systems are compared, as a 'stage' beyond formal operations, although Tennant (1988) argues that conceptualizing dialectical thinking as a 'stage' may be misleading. He suggests that dialectical thinking is an ongoing process, which offers an *alternative* to documenting the 'stages' and 'phases' of adult life:

> The basic notion here is that there is a constant 'dialectic' between the changing or developing person and the changing or evolving society. That is, the person creates, and is created by the society in which he/she lives. (ibid; 62).

There is agreement, however, in connection with the idea of dialectical processes, that there emerges the development of relativistic thought, where choices are between more or less appropriate alternatives related to the situation, not the application of

absolute criteria to all situations. Dialectical thinking is relativistic by definition (Arlin, 1984). Arlin, in fact, suggests that relativism is a structure of adult thought (ibid; 259) and argues there could even be a fifth (problem-*finding*) stage (Arlin, 1975). Even where formal operations are presupposed, relativistic operations permit the selection of one such system among many, 'where several contradictory formal-operational systems could apply' (Sinnott, 1984; 302). A major difference between formal operations and the post-formal relativistic processes is the increased function of subjective selection, referred to by Sinnott as 'necessary subjectivity':

> Formal operations presume logical consistency. In contrast, relativistic operations presume subjective selection among logically contradictory formal-operational subsystems, each of which is internally consistent (ibid; 302).

The subjective element is derived from experience and interpersonal relationships:

> ... postformal operations develop due to the demands on the mature knower for dealing effectively with reality. The reality includes interpersonal relations, which have a large component of necessary subjectivity. (ibid; 303/304)

These interpersonal relations, it is argued, are 'necessarily subjective'.

> Interpersonal relations ... are mainly a reflection of how people interact socially and know this interaction. Interpersonal relations seem to change constantly in their reality as a function of their being known or perceived in different ways by different individuals in the relationship. (Sinnott, 1984; 299).

Sinnott (1984) defines 'intelligence' in adulthood as the ability '... to make relative judgements and to understand and deal with the complexities of interpersonal events.' (ibid; 302) and argues that adults must use relativistic operations '... to organise their complex understanding of interpersonal and everyday reality adaptively'. (ibid; 300). The implications of this for the relativistic thinker extend beyond simply the ability to choose between logically contradictory but potentially equally-applicable formal sub-systems; for the individual inhabits a social world, interacting on an everyday level

with other people, and does not exist in the abstracted world of Piagetian mathematical models. This is an important point, for the models we make:

> ... are enriched by our general knowledge of the world around us: the more that we already know, the more that we are able to know how to know. And the operations that we perform on the models that we make in our minds can be far from the cold rules of logic and statistics (Blakemore, 1988; 248).

The notion of dialectic and relativistic thinking, then, would seem to indicate that there are forms of cognititive organisation and process which lie outside the Piagetian framework altogether, and suggest the potential for continuing growth and change throughout adulthood.

Research on memory processes illustrates further the possible differential adaptation of the adult learner. Although the use of past experience to deal with new experience is fundamental to the way the human mind works (Cohen, 1986; 26), there is no suggestion of uniform advancement in all cognitive domains. What is remembered is inextricably linked to experience and understanding. Studies have shown, for example, that elderly people with a life-time of expertise in a particular knowledge domain such as music or gardening have a good retention of information in this domain even when memory for other matters is severely curtailed (Cohen, 1986; 53).

> Studies with adults underline the fact that it is extremely difficult to remember what you do not understand. The more you know about a topic already, the easier it is to absorb further new information about it. (ibid; 53)

This is because the new information is mapped on to existing schemas, or knowledge-structures already possessed by the individual. A schema can be defined as a framework or packet of knowledge (memory representation) based on past experience (Cohen, 1986; 31). There can be simple and complex 'packages'. Within

cognitive psychology in recent years, there has been a move away from the idea of knowledge as having a single, unified format towards systems that focus on more complex, higher levels of structure. The purpose has been to indicate how knowledge can be organised into higher-order, wholistic units that allow for the encoding of more complex inter-relationships among lower level units (Rumelhart and Norman, 1985).

The apparent potential for cognitive growth beyond the post-formal stage, carries implications for education and learning. From an educational standpoint, the idea that cognitive structures continue to evolve means that adults have more learning potential than might previously have been considered (Friedan, 1994; Kimmell, 1980) and challenges earlier negative stereotypes of adults, which emphasised inevitable decline with age (Kroll, 1988; Allman, 1983). The findings demonstrate that, given reasonable health, adults are able to continue an active, intellectually stimulating, and rewarding lifestyle, with the ability to meet new challenges and to 're-define' themselves as they move into new and satisfying realms of knowledge and experience.

Learning - an unsettling experience

These new and satisfying realms of knowledge and experience, however, are not entered into without some mental and emotional discomfort. For learning itself can be a difficult process, giving rise to a range of conflicting thoughts and feelings. It can be exhilarating, motivating, rewarding yet also, painful, disturbing and unsettling; old habits may have to change, former beliefs and attitudes may have to be reassessed or even replaced; earlier assumptions may have to be revised. Adults may be returning to education after a long absence from any 'formal' schooling, and have to overcome possible negative feelings derived from earlier experiences.

Jarvis (1987) points out that learning occurs when there is a disjuncture between biography and experience, when the past is at odds with the current experiences. Weil (1993) makes a similar point when she describes disjunction as:

> ... a sense of feeling at odds with oneself, as a learner learning in a particular set of circumstances. It ... emerges out of mutually interacting influences, as well as past and present experiences of being a learner in different kinds of contexts ... (ibid; 161).

For adults returning to more formalised learning, the experience can be uncomfortable. Woolfe et al (1987; 97) observe that continuing education itself:

> ... places adult learners in the position of facing up to what may be, for many people, very new and frightening feelings.

While Holden (1981) writes that learning is:

> . . . an upsetting, an agitating, a deranging, a confusing or a disturbing of understanding; it is something not settled, liable to change, liable to movement, open to further discussion.

Open Studies students have reported these kinds of effects. One woman in her 50s described how she was unable to sleep at nights 'because so many ideas (from the course she was on) were spinning round'. Although this was 'unsettling', she saw this effect in positive terms of excitement and 'stimulating ideas' rather than in a negative sense of 'losing sleep'. Another woman, also in her 50s, in a psychology group, remarked of her learning: 'Something's going on, but I haven't a clue what it is. I can't get to grips with this. It's very difficult.' A man in his 40s commented that: 'Sometimes, it's really heavy. It's just baffling. But it's fascinating.' Others have spoken of how new ideas or concepts are sometimes easy to understand and 'absorb'; on other occasions, it takes some time for things to 'sink in'. Beard (1976) has observed that people differ in their ability to relinquish learning 'sets', while Holden (op. cit.) notes that people are

often loathe to abandon accepted ways of seeing the world. Some will find it easier than others to assimilate new knowledge and experience. A general lack of confidence in the self and an unrealistic appraisal of personal abilities and intellectual product are not uncommon (Stanton, 1981; Powell, 1981). Postgraduate students have remarked how their study sometimes makes them feel 'vulnerable', 'at a loss' or 'not quite sure' what they are doing, while Woods (1985) has referred to the 'pain' of writing up research. Recalling the work into postformal thought in adults, and the notion of continued cognitive growth, either as a result of forced adaptations because of decrement in some areas, or as continuing dialectic between the individual and society, necessarily involving changes in perspective, it would seem that upset and pain are an integral part of learning. Indeed, returning to Woods' description of writing up research - which can be regarded as relevant here because of the creative 'learning' experience it involves - he suggests that pain is inevitable and necessary:

> Pain is an indispensable accompaniment of the process ... If we do not feel pain, there is almost certainly something wrong. Perhaps we are not progressing, and simply marking time ... We must confront the pain barrier till it hurts (ibid; 87).

The state of unease disrupts both cognitive and affective processes:

> In the cognitive sense it refers to the dislocation of structures of thought, the dismembering of schemata, the dissonance between conflicting perceptions of an object. In the affective sense it is the disturbance of feelings, unresolved emotional states and anxiety in various depths. (Holden, 1981; 11).

Successful resolution of the anxiety or tension can result in a 'more satisfying way of looking at the world' (ibid). Dissonance here can be seen in terms of the psychological discomfort arising out of 'non-fitting relations' among cognitive elements. Resolving

the anxiety or tension is taken to refer to reducing the psychological dissonance and achieving consonance.

The suggestion that there can be a successful resolution of the conflict, however, is not to imply that there is an educational end-point. Just as 'maturity' and 'adulthood' can be seen as ever-evolving ideals, so adult educators ' ... tend implicitly, at least, to see adult education as an open-ended process, not a final state attainable at some particular point in a person's life at which they become educated" (Leicester, 1993; 23). Understanding is not something given 'once and for all' . It is:

> ... constantly unsettled as we negotiate and renegotiate our view of the world. Thus education as the unsettling of our understanding of the world is a lifelong process. (Holden, 1981; 14).

One of the tasks of education is to come to terms with an age of discontinuity and ' ... to devise constructive learning strategies which will enable people to adapt to changes in their own lives without feeling any threat to the overall integrity of their identity' (Flude and Parrott, 1979; 31).

This is important, and relevant to the central theme of this research, which is about the impact of Open Studies on personal identity. For it suggests implications for both adult education and identity. From the point of view of adult education, it suggests that adult educators need to be critically aware of what the experience of learning means to the students, so that they are in a position to understand and, through their planning, constructively manage the process (Weil, 1993; 161). From the point of view of identity, it implies that cognitive change continues throughout adulthood that adults are continually 're-presenting' themselves in their interactions; change implies the ability to adopt new perspectives, to think in new ways, to see things in a 'new light':

> As adults' sense of identity of knowledge of themselves or others grows in depth and meaning, they become increasingly in control of how they think about themselves. Reflective minds and minds not crowded with detail but in search of concepts, ideas and principles means that people are in control of their thinking and in control of their transactions within their social-historical contexts. (Allman, 1983; 119)

But, as has been demonstrated, this is not necessarily a comfortable process. The disjuncture created by the learning process, on the one hand, and the evolution of personal identity, involving shifts or transformations in perspective, on the other, are intimately related. As Weil (1993) observes:

> A sense of disjunction can be felt to be associated with who one is, where one is, and how one's present experience as a learner relates to previous or concurrent experiences, within and outside the formal learning context. Disjunction can be associated with feelings of alienation, anger, frustration and confusion (161).

She argues that disjunction:

> ... always refers to a sense of fragmentation and involves issues of both personal and social identity (161).

Several themes have thus far emerged: the individual as *multi-faceted*, with *continuing potential* for cognitive growth and development throughout life; adulthood not as a 'fixed ' or 'static' entity, but rather as an *ongoing process*; the *deliberate* and *planned* programme of adult education, through Open Studies, presenting the possibility of *perspective transformation* through the accumulation of new knowledge and experience related to previous learning, and finally the notion, drawn from developmental psychology, of *cognitive growth* beyond the 'final' post-formal stage at adolescence. If these are drawn together, then the picture of the adult, with his or her potential for learning and the continuing salience of 'identity' in later years, is in sharp contrast to the negative stereotype of individuals having reached the 'plateau' of adulthood until inevitable decline and death.

Although by the 1970s most development psychologists were acknowledging that cognitive decline was not a necessary consequence of ageing , for instance (Allman, 1983), the evidence and research methodology that produced it

> ... constituted an effective challenge to a much larger body of psychological evidence which had supported the socially persistent stereotype of inevitable and irreversible decline with advancing age. (ibid; 107).

A 'plasticity' model emerged, which recognised that a number of different interacting factors influence the course of adult life:

> whether or not individuals' cognitive or thinking abilities decline, remain stable or continue to develop over the years of adulthood 'depends' on the interplay of many factors. Psychologists began to recognise that development, or lack of it, during adulthood was inextricably linked to the degree and quality of individuals' interactions with their social and historical contexts. (ibid).

Allman adds that though the evidence of 1970s 'may complicate our thinking about adult development'

> ...it does make it quite clear that people have the 'potential' for continuing development across the entire lifespan, and this idea has revolutionised our thinking about adults. To say that the 'potential' for adults is for lifelong cognitive development contradicts the prevailing view that adulthood is a stable period of life at least until what was believed to be 'the inevitable consequences of ageing' causes decline in cognitive functioning. (ibid).

From an identity viewpoint, this suggests that while there are continuities in perceptions of self, and that there is relative stability in an individual's sense of identity, this does not mean it is unchanging. Learning, which is said to occur at the 'interface of people's biography and socio-cultural milieu' (Jarvis, 1992; 17) can impact on identity through changes in content and organisation of knowledge as new information is acquired. Hormuth (1990) remarks:

> As information is added about oneself, the content and structure of the self-concept changes. New information may also change not only the content of the cognitions about oneself but also the way they are connected, which cognitions are central, and which ones are peripheral in a network of self-related cognitions. (35).

He adds that from a cognitive point of view, the self-concept is constantly changing, because it constantly acquires new information. At the same time it maintains stability because it is very conservative with respect to cognitions added to knowledge about oneself. He cites Kihlstrom and Cantor 's (1984; 29) observation that the self-concept ' ... provides for continuity amidst change, congruent with the individual's overall self-concept'. Furthermore, in terms of adapting to new circumstances, capacities change so gradually that adaptation ' ... is almost an unconscious process' (Birren, 1964; 148).

In looking beyond Piaget's post-formal operations, this section has attempted to draw from the perspective - cognitive developmental psychology - to contribute to the overall view of adults having the potential to continue learning throughout life. This has been set against the broader context of what it means to be an adult, some of the implications of this for adult education, and how these relate to the question of identity in adult life. Piaget's framework provides a useful reference for discussing the development of adults. The cognitive perspective provides theoretical support for the contention that there is continued cognitive change beyond the 'mature' formal-operational stage. But the section has also drawn attention to the fact that it is not simply the ability to construct and manipulate abstract, mental models, think in dialectical and relativistic ways and experience "perspective transformation" in an abstracted sense, that contribute to learning and personal identity. Too much emphasis

on abstract cognitive processes would fail to acknowledge the subjective, social and interpersonal dimensions which seem to play such an important part in adult learning and the formation and maintenance of identity. As Osborn (1982; 8), notes:

> Social factors such as the complexity of one's life-style become the supportive context for behaviour rather than the biological base.

With this idea of cognitive, affective and social dimensions integrating to form a model of the individual in a social context, the concepts of 'self' and 'identity' are now explored.

5. Self and identity: time, place and the meaning of others.

The terms 'self' and 'identity' are used in everyday discourse and their familiarity gives them a deceptive sense of certainty. But looked at more closely, they become increasingly elusive. At one level, a person's identity and sense of self can be depicted in terms of personal likes and dislikes, habits, appearance, lifestyle, nature of employment, social milieu; a diverse range of components - all that a person 'owns' - contributing to the person's sense of him or herself in everyday life (James, 1890); but it can also be seen in terms of values, beliefs, attitudes and, supremely, language - the symbolic system which both communicates and constructs the personal and social realities in which individuals find themselves (Coates and Cameron, 1991; Cameron, 1992; Crowley, 1991). The heading for this section itself reflects the tensions and paradoxes, as well as the integrations, within the conceptual framework delineating 'self and identity'.

This section addresses those tensions and paradoxes, investigates different approaches towards the topic, examines some of the issues arising and finally presents Rossan's (1987) model of identity that has guided this research. The heading itself gives shape to the section, for in it are embodied some fundamental concerns. First, the phrase 'self and identity' reflects the ambiguity of the concepts and their relationship to each other. On the one hand, there is the implication of separation, with 'self' and 'identity' existing as separate and distinct concepts in their own right. The word 'and' serves, in this case, to separate the two. The argument that 'self' and 'identity' can be conceptualised as separate, or differentiated (but related) concepts has been propounded by some (Weigert, 1988; Stone, 1962), and is one that is adopted in this

study; it is assumed that a distinction can be made between 'self' and 'identity' (This particular issue is discussed in more detail later). Stated so baldly this is altogether too simplistic, for 'self' and 'identity' cannot simply be divided, as if they were a block of cheese cut in two. And this points to the other half of the equation, and the ambiguity inherent in the concepts. For the word 'and' also serves to *join* the two concepts. Instead of being (self) + (identity), like a mathematical equation, with two separate factors being added together, the two concepts become a unified whole: self *and* identity conjoin to form a unity, with the implication of shared attributes. To return to the cheese analogy; the block may be divided, but it remains the same substance.

The terms 'self' and 'identity' have also been used interchangeably in the literature, as if they were the same 'substance', with, it appears, little or no distinction being made between the two. Sometimes, however, this seems less the result of a considered theoretical position than simply using the terms loosely, or even as the result of theoretical confusion. Indeed, Weigert (1988; 263) points out that the construct of identity has been utilised as a 'catch-all scientific and folk term to refer to what we take to be the unique human experience of self as self-consciously known'. It is possible to argue that the foundations of a distinction between 'self' and 'identity' are laid even before birth, with the baby being a responding, feeling 'self' even before it acquires an 'identity' known to itself. Newborn babies, for instance, had previously been considered helpless, passive organisms, insensitive even to painful stimulation (Pulaski, 1978; Oates and Floyd, 1979, 22). However, modern research has shown that the newborn is:

> ...an active, attentive, selective little being who is perceiving and organizing a myriad of sensations from his earliest days. He can discriminate smells and tastes, and ... During the first week of life he may respond to such sounds as a rattle, a

> bell, or pure tones of different pitches ... Very early he will look toward the sound of a soft, high voice, particularly his mother's. (Pulaski, 1978; 14).

The child will also respond to painful stimuli, light, patterns and, in particular, it has been suggested, the human face; although this may be more to do with pattern and contours than by the fact that it is human (Papousek and Papousek, 1982; Fantz, 1961). This early reaction to the external world appears to be a 'highly adaptive response that is innate'. According to Piaget '... the beginnings of intelligence lie in just such adaptive behaviour'. (Pulaski, 1978; 14). There is evidence, too, that the child not only responds adaptively to the world, but also acts upon that world. Mother-child studies, for instance, have shown that the baby's actions can influence the mother's behaviour, which in turn influences the baby's response and so on (Stratton, 1982; John and Dallos, 1984b); the relationship, in this way, is interactive, with the child exerting influence on its environment as well as being influenced by it.

If identity is defined as a complex set of attitudes the individual has towards himself (Rossan, 1987) - that, in fact, the individual is able to view his or her 'self' as an object - then the newborn, it is argued, cannot properly be said to have awareness, in an objective sense, of his or her own identity. At a very young age, babies are said to be egotistical (Piaget, 1964); they are all 'id', seeking to satisfy only basic needs (Freud, 1986). If identity has a social component, as is being argued here, then awareness of 'identity', as such, would not be possible. However, an experiential *subjective* sense of self - even if unspoken - is evolving, at, or possibly even from before birth (Honess and Yardley, 1987). A child may sleep better if he hears a rhythmic sound pattern that reminds him of his mother's steady heart beat in the womb, for instance (Pulaski, 1978; 14). Furthermore, Burns (1982; 33) points out that 'the infant is more highly

developed and more able to interact with his environment early on than we ever expected' and that newborn infants ' ... are not passive, unresponsive creatures who spend most of their time sleeping. New experimental techniques reveal that they interact quite markedly with their environment ...' It would be stretching credibility to suggest that the newborn child is aware of 'self' in the way that adults are; it has not yet acquired the capacity to symbolically represent that self. Indeed, for Mead, the infant has no 'self', since the self is conceived of as an internalized social dialogue (Murphy, 1984; 105) formed '... through the 'definitions' made by others'. (Meltzer, 1964; 10).

However, apart from the fact that Mead and others may have underestimated the capacity of babies, the point is that a rudimentary distinction can be drawn between 'self' and 'identity' or between the 'raw data' and the ability to symbolically conceptualize that data (Gergen, 1977). At one level, 'self' can be said to both precede and underpin - yet also be part of - identity; that, in effect, generalised traits, and a 'core' sense of being form the fundamental 'self' (Rossan, 1987) while 'identity' develops as a result of the organism's interaction with the world, from numerous and varied sources, from negotiating and renegotiating different role behaviour throughout life (Horrocks and Jackson, 1972) and from the ability of the individual to view the self as an 'object' from a relatively consistent standpoint (Sandler, 1986). In this way, self can be seen as the generic sense of 'being' a living, feeling, thinking, responding and initiating organism; identity derives from the context in which that organism finds itself; self is more general, identity more specific. Care should be taken not to equate the general sense of self, which incorporates a biological element, with any simple notion of its being biologically determined, however; for there is also the function of consciousness, or awareness of self, that enables the self to transcend both biological

and cultural constraints. Consciousness, which has also been defined as the tutor who 'supervises the education of the living substance' (Schroedinger, 1944):

> ... allows us to observe ourselves, to evaluate, to judge our predicaments, and to plan. This property of self-reference is the key to self-transcendence. It makes us contest and transcend our biological limitations and alter our environment "at will" to suit our needs and aspirations. (Harth, 1990; 81)

The idea of a more generalised sense of self, able to transcend immediate limitations, and a more specific contextually-bound sense of identity, finds resonance in Weigert's (1988; 271) distinction, in which self '... is historical, but derivatively and indeterminately' whereas identity is also derivative but '... directly historical.' In this study, self and identity are seen as capable of being conceptually separable, since this facilitates discussion in terms of students' feelings, hopes, ambitions, meanings and their 'ideal self', and the more public expression of the 'self' in the form of a personal or social identity, which finds itself situated in a more specific context (Alexander and Wiley, 1981), recognisable by others.

The two concepts, however, are at times also used interchangeably. This is to convey both the holistic sense in which the concepts are being used - individuals are depicted as multi-faceted, developing and changing, but at the same time integrated and 'continuing' organisms - yet also to lend emphasis to different aspects of the individual, with the 'self', at times, denoting a more personal, deep-rooted, 'private' dimension and 'identity' conveying a notion of how that 'private' self is presented to the 'public' world; in this sense, identity becomes the 'representation of self in everyday life' (Goffman, 1959); individuals become located in, and simultaneously contribute to, the social context - with both 'personal' and 'social' identity (Haimes, 1987) and using 'presentational strategies' to legitimize 'definitions of themselves' (Ball, 1972).

This relates to a further question over use of the terms 'identity' and 'self-concept' which are also used interchangeably. Most theorists would argue that they are essentially the same. Indeed, Burns (1982) describes the self-concept as ' ... a set of attitudes to the self'; that is almost exactly the same phrase as Rossan uses to describe 'identity' - i.e, ' ... a set of more or less integrated attitudes towards the self'. An 'attitude' is regarded as having three essential ingredients:

> (a) belief which may or may not be valid
> (b) an emotional and evaluative connotation around the belief and
> (c) a consequent likelihood of responding (or behaving) in a particular way (Burns, 1982; 3).

These become evaluative components in the individual's perceptions of him or herself and the construction of an identity based on those perceptions. They form an integral part of the individual's self-concept or sense of identity. In this study, however, a distinction is made in terms of the actual use of the words and how they are generally understood; there appears to be a difference in emphasis, connotation and the way in which the terms are understood. Erikson uses the term 'identity' to indicate the cultural context of the self, and this is significant. For it indicates the interplay between biology and culture, and that identity comes from 'achievement that has meaning in culture'. The term 'self-concept' suggests an all-embracing but more inward-looking focus on the 'self', whereas the term 'identity', despite difficulties in actually defining what it refers to, seems to denote not simply an individual, personal dimension, but also a social and cultural one, located in a shared context. The way in which the terms have different shades of meaning and are used and understood differently in ordinary common-sense usage can perhaps be simply illustrated by reference to their use in the media. In the search for a criminal, for instance, the phrase:

Police have revealed the identity of the wanted man

will be more readily understood than:

Police have revealed the self-concept of the wanted man.

Time and place

Personal identity, it is suggested, is not simply a private issue. Bearing in mind Weigert's notion of identity being historically derived, then 'time', 'place' and 'meaning of others' become salient, for these help to locate the individual in a particular culture at a particular moment in history. At a theoretical level, 'self' and 'identity' necessarily become abstract concepts for the purpose of analysis; yet in the common-sense world, they are not theoretically abstracted; the 'social' element of identity is taken for granted, and its evolution is occurring all the time. Indeed, as Emerson (1981; 31) points out, whenever people encounter one another in social interactions ' ... most of the things social psychologists talk and write about are happening *all at once*. Communication is in progress; roles are being formed, enacted and negotiated; attributions are being made, both to other and to self; and identities are being validate or revised.' (Author's emphasis). Language confirms the '... taken-for-granted world that forms the foundation of our personal identity' (Tennant, 1988; 63). How people see themselves and others in the 'taken-for-granted' world is one way of 'making sense' of that world. And that involves a concern with 'time,' 'place' and 'others.'

'Time' can be defined as the flux, the ongoing flow-like nature of individual experience, coupled with 'a capacity to remember fragments of the past and to envision possibilities in the future' (Stevens, 1985; 44). The relationship between time, self and identity, it has been argued, is fundamental to individuals' perceptions of who and

what they are: in fact, underlying consciousness itself is a sense of the movement of time (Stevens, 1985). The passing of time can become particularly salient for adults, as they become increasingly aware of their own mortality, of how long they have lived and how much time is left (Neugarten, 1968), of what they have or have not been able to achieve.

> Pervading the present world of experience is an implicit awareness of events which have happened before and which will happen in the future. While it is by no means a clear progression, there is a sense too of personal, *biographical* flow. The current personal world represents a kind of distillation of this life so far, coloured by what life may hold in the future. (Author's emphasis. Stevens, 1985 :; 35).

Time can be subdivided into 'personal time' and 'historical time'. Personal time can be experienced in many different ways and on many different levels (Thomas, 1991). On the one hand, time can be experienced as the 'continuous creation of unforeseeable novelty' (Bergson, 1965). On the other hand, there is awareness that, 'once experienced, it can never be turned back' (Stevens, 1985; 44). Historical time can be used to indicate the actual time - or age - in which individuals live, compared to other times (Mannheim, 1952).

Sense of self and identity relate intimately to the 'times' in which they find themselves. There is even speculation that 'self-identity' - the capacity to 'present oneself to oneself' - is a relatively recent phenomenon which has evolved as a result of human beings needing to coordinate social relations (Crook, 1980). This co-ordination has required the capacity to empathize - i.e., for people to put themselves in the place of another, or to 'take the role of that person' - which presupposes the individuals' ability to see themselves and others *as* individuals, (Stevens, 1985 ; 114). It has further been argued that human consciousness, and in particular reflexive awareness

and individual agency, has evolved only since the Greek civilisation about 3,000 years ago. Before then, it is claimed, actions were intuited from the 'voices of the gods' rather than through introspection (Jaynes, 1979). This thesis is not discussed here. Crook and Jaynes' speculations are included briefly to illustrate that within the literature, the notion of qualitatively different historical times has not only attracted scholarly attention, but has also given rise to the suggestion that 'self' and 'identity', as used today - however that might be - might themselves actually represent recent historical evolutions. Mannheim (1952) has suggested that different generations " ... may see the world in very different ways from their counterparts in earlier generations." The point is that not only do people experience personal time *subjectively* as they move along the trajectory of their lives, but they are also born into a particular *time in history*, and become 'of their times', with those times affecting how the people who live in them perceive themselves. As Hemming (1982) says of Freud, he was a 'man of his times.' An Open Studies student interested in history, who was approaching retirement, also found her studies had given her insight into her own past:

> I never realised how much a *child of my era* I was until I stopped and looked back on it ... (emphasis added).

Coupled with the 'time' that people are born into is the notion of 'place'. For as well as being "products" of their age, individuals are also "products" of the place in which they find themselves. Society has 'empirically available definitions awaiting the accident of birth to impose a set of identities and locate us within its strata' (Weigert, 1988). In other words, individuals are born into a specific time, place and culture. Erikson (1963) underlines this with his observation that 'an individual life is the accidental coincidence of but one life cycle with but one segment of history'.

At the moment of birth, although the child has genetic potential, it has not yet developed an objective knowledge of self or identity; potentially, the child could develop *any* identity. But identities are bestowed upon the child by the culture into which it is born. One of the first is that of sex - is it a boy or a girl? (Brownmiller, 1986; 11) - and these initial distinctions are rapidly reinforced by cultural stereotypes (blue for a boy; pink for a girl; Action Men for boys, Barbie Dolls for girls etc). An effect of this is that the characteristics associated with the stereotypes are of unequal value: 'brave', 'strong', rugged', 'capable', 'confident', are among the valued masculine characterizations, while 'petite', 'weak', 'helpless', 'giving' and 'pretty' are prized feminine ones (Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1983; 24), and this leads to different expectations of boys and girls, men and women. Gender identity and sense of self emerge together and reflect the prevailing culture (ibid; 25).

The meaning of others

The individual's view of self, however, and the indentities that he or she acquires are not simply derived from an inanimate, value-free, environment. Nor are they etched on to a blank slate, or tabula rasa, as the classical behaviourists might assert (Watson, 1930). As has already been suggested in previous sections, the individual develops through interaction with the environment, and that environment includes 'significant others.' The one common theme running throughout the literature on self and identity, regardless of any differences in how those concepts are defined, is the importance of others in the definition of 'self.' As Mischel (1977; 25) comments: "All human relations, no matter what their specific character may be, depend on patterns of expectation people have of each other." James (1892) argues that a person not only

has as many 'social selves' as there are individuals who recognise him, but practically as many different social selves as their are groups of persons 'about whose opinion he cares.' A main determinant of the self-concept, or identity, then, is the social relationship.

But reference to the 'meaning of others' is intended to imply not just the fact that 'others' are important in the construction of 'identity', in that individuals compare themselves in a direct way with other individuals - i.e., the 'meaning' of others is in terms of 'social comparison' - but also the more dynamic notion of responding to the view others have of the self, or what the individual 'believes' the view of the others to be. To draw on a Laingian perspective, this would be in terms of what the individual believes the other thinks of the individual, and the implications this has for the sense of self and identity; in other words, it is not just a case of social comparison, but also reflected appraisals. The literature consistently supports the principle of reflected appraisals, and shows a strong and consistent association between the reflected self and the self-concept (Rosenberg, 1981; 598).

Social comparison and reflected appraisals suggest interpretation, and interaction with others in the social environment, and this requires cognitive processing, as the individual assimilates and accommodates new information. This contributes to the individual's construction of meaning. Meaning itself has been defined as 'cognitive process of relationship and patterning' (Horrocks and Jackson, 1972). An individual's behaviour ' ... is essentially determined by the meaning he has constructed' (55). And a key feature of the individual's sense of identity is the search for meaning (Stevens, 1983). One effect of the complexity of personal experience is that ' ... we are likely to

try to interrelate its various aspects in whatever way we can to give them meaning and coherence.' (op. cit).

The metaphor of mirrors is used to depict the interactions between individuals. Cooley (1902) wrote:

> In a very large and interesting class of cases the social reference takes the form of a somewhat definite imagination of how one's self - that is, any idea he appropriates - appears in a particular mind, and the kind of self-feeling one has is determined by the attitude toward this attributed to that other mind. A social self of this sort might be called the reflected or looking glass self:
>
> Each to each a looking glass
> Reflects the other that doth pass

From this 'looking glass' perspective, individuals construct 'who they are' through interpreting the reactions of others. This is not an 'objective' image of the self ; an individual's interpretation of what others think of him is modified by what he thinks of others (Lee and Williams, 1979).

That this is a continuing and certainly no simple process is further conveyed through Laing et al's (1966) notion of 'refractions'

> The human race is a myriad of refractive surfaces staining the white radiance of eternity. Each surface refracts the refraction of refractions of refractions.
>
> Each
>
> ... self refracts the refractions of others' refractions of self's refractions of others' refractions ...

Laing's description conveys well how individuals are enmeshed in a complex social process, imbued with layer upon layer of meaning. From earliest infancy, and the role of the 'significant other' as primary caretaker, individuals develop their sense of 'who they are' from their relationship with 'who others are; 'their sense of 'self' and 'identity' is constructed out of interaction with, and interpreting the 'meaning' of, others.

Theoretical approaches to identity

In the previous sections, some conceptualisations of 'self' and 'identity' were offered in terms of time, place and the influence of others. The aim was to convey the dynamic nature of the concepts and relate them to social process which contribute to their formation and development. This remaining section will examine some main theoretical approaches to the question of 'self' and 'identity,' continuing and adding to themes already introduced.

James (1892) developed a theory of the self in which he distinguished between the Me, or 'self-as-known, an empirical aggregate of things objectively known' and the I, or Self-as-knower: a discrimination between pure experience (I) and the contents of that experience (Me). He considered the global self as simultaneously Me and I, but warned these should be regarded as 'discriminated aspects' and not as 'separate things'

> ... the identity of *I* with *Me*, even in the very act of their discrimination, is perhaps the most ineradicable dictum of common-sense, and must not be undermined by our terminology (ibid; 177 author's emphasis).

Harter (1988; 43) speaking from the developmental perspective, echoes this point when she argues that the I-self and the Me-self are 'two conceptually distinct, but experientially intertwined, aspects of the self' that can meaningfully be identified. For James, the empirical self, or Me, is in the broadest sense ' ... the sum total of all that a man (sic) can call his.'

> ... not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank account (James, 1892; 177)

James pointed to the role of others in the formation of the self - '... a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognise him' - and to the experience of change, yet also emphasized the notion of continuity:

> ... the Me of now and the Me of then are *continuous* ... the Me, like every other aggregate, changes as it grows ... The identity which we recognise ... can only be the relative identity of a slow shifting in which there is always some common ingredient retained (ibid).

Erikson (1959; 113) argued that identity formation '... neither begins nor ends with adolescence: it is a lifelong development, largely unconscious to the individual and his society' and, as with James, describes identity as a 'subjective sense of invigorating sameness and continuity' (Erikson, 1968; 19). In common with others mentioned earlier, Erikson also points to the interaction between the individual and his social context, identifying the interrelationship between the two. With identity, 'we deal with a process "located" in *the core of the individual* and yet also *in the core of his communal culture*' (Erikson, 1968; 22. Author's emphasis).

Like Erikson, G.H. Mead attempts to bridge the gap between the individual and society. He sees mind, self and society evolving out of the ongoing social process. Like James (and Cooley), he distinguishes between the 'I' and the 'me' as components of the self. The 'I' corresponds to the impulsive, biological tendencies of the individual, reminiscent, in fact, of Freud's 'id'. It is '... the initial, spontaneous, unorganized aspects of human experience'. (Murphy, 1984; 104) The 'me' is the conventional organisation of the self, consisting of the internalized attitudes of others as guides for behaviour. "The 'me' is a me which was the I at an earlier time" (Mead, 1934; 174). The me is often depicted as a force that restraints or redirects the I in order to seek gratification

in ways which are socially acceptable. Yet, whereas Freud's id and superego are seen as conflicting forces, Mead's 'I' and 'me' are more collaborative, facilitating a differentiated yet whole self.

For Mead, self emerges as a result of interactions with others. (See also Hewitt, 1984). Such interactions involve the ability to take on the role of others (to put oneself in the position of another person). Through reflecting upon these roles, the individual understands how various social roles encountered are interrelated. Separate 'roles' are not needed for each and every 'other' encountered, however. Mead argues that the individual construes the attitudes of groups of people, by abstracting a 'composite' role out of the actual roles of particular people. The individual thus begins to see him or herself from the point of view of what Mead refers to as 'generalized others', that is, not specific people, but groups with common expectations of him or her (Murphy, 1984; 108).

To some extent, the experience of Open Studies students can be interpreted in this light, in that the students belong to a particular 'group.' Although the student will have personal aims and expectations, his or her behaviour and progress will be influenced by the assumed expectations of the group as a whole. (ie students and tutor). The Open Studies group, in this sense, is the 'generalized other' which influences the individual's perception of both others and self. Being a 'student' becomes not simply an individual enterprise, but one which is associated with a wider 'reference group'. Once the individual is able to view him or herself from the consistent standpoint of a 'generalized other' then that individual has acquired an identity, and can " ... transcend the particular situation s/he is in because s/he has other expectations and definitions by which to judge reality." (Murphy, 1984; 108).

Identity: of continuing importance

There is not only a continuing but increasing interest in issues concerning the self and identity. Recent literature has included work on identity as 'text' (Shotter and Gergen, 1989), as social construction (Skevington and Baker, 1989) and in terms of sexuality (Caplan, 1987) as well as in lifespan studies (Honess and Yardley, 1987b), from which source Rossan's model for this research was adopted. Erikson's (1963; 282) assertion that the study of identity ' ... becomes as strategic in our time as the study of sexuality was in Freud's time', is echoed in Appleyard's (1993; 222) contention that 'In some sense the inviolability or otherwise of the human self is the complete and most pressing issue of contemporary knowledge'. For all this, the concepts remain elusive (Rosenberg, 1987; Holland, 1985; ix-x). Although Stevens (1985; 66) asserts that 'identity has received considerable attention from psychologists' and Honess and Yardley (1987b; xv) point out that 'self' and its counterpart ' identity' are currently receiving a significant renewal of interest from social scientists and those working in related disciplines, there seems little consensus over the structure of identity or the methodology to research it.

Harre (1989; 21) finds there is much to update in the concept of the self, while Hart et al (1987; 130) argue that little attention has been paid to the construct of personal identity and that it is 'probably safe to conclude that any single methodology '... is insufficient for a thorough investigation of identity development'. Rosenberg (1987; 194) shows that the meanings assigned to the concept of 'identity' have been many and varied. 'Identity' has been used to refer to: (i) a sense of continuity, (ii) distinctiveness, (iii) group identification or ethnic identity, (iv) social role

configurations, (v) authenticity, essence or real self, (vi) situation roles, (vii) efficacy, volition or personal agency, (viii) stability of values and sense of life meaning, (ix) self-conception, (x) the distinguishing character of an individual.

Within the literature, some broad themes and variations emerge, however. These are continuity and sameness contrasting with the experience of distinctness and change (Hart et al, 1987); the interplay of personal and social experiences and the relationship with others in the formation of self and personal identity, and the notion of constructed and conferred aspects of identity (Marcia, 1987); that is, the identity individuals develop through their relationships with others and those that they are 'given' by society, such as gender identity at birth. These matters are not discussed any further at this point, but in conjunction with the rest of the section, serve to indicate the range and complexity of issues surrounding the concepts of self generally and identity in particular.

As a way of approaching the topic, making it more manageable, and providing a model that would be both accessible and applicable to the task at hand, Rossan's (1987) depiction of identity has been used. This has provided the unifying thread for the research, and is presented below.

Rossan defines identity as a set of complex more or less integrated attitudes the individual holds towards him or her self. As such, they are inextricably linked with the individual's goals, values and beliefs (Waterman, 1984; 29). Rossan hypothesizes that the three components of identity are 'sub-identities', 'generalised traits' and the 'core'. Sub-identities arise as the result of role enactments and are tied to positions held in the social structure. Examples might be husband, wife, friend, typist, boss. These are the

components most susceptible to change, yet also help to provide a sense of coherence within the individual.

> Hypothesizing the existence of a number of different sub-identities allows for changes to occur in different contexts and at different times of life, without negating the sense of continuity which arises from other components (304)

A woman may return to learning after her children have grown up, for instance, and so add the 'student' role to her sub-identities, yet still remain a wife and mother.

Generalised traits are 'characteristics the individual attributes to him/herself because they are common to many role enactments, or are related to a particularly salient sub-identity' (ibid; 305). A woman may be warm, caring and compassionate in all her different roles - or sub-identities - as a mother, wife, student or employee, for instance.

Finally, the core component of identity refers to the most generalised, salient attributes and is the 'fundamental sense of self' (ibid). Rossan argues it probably begins early in life, 'long before the individual can manipulate symbols in a conscious, controlled fashion'. It can be seen to relate to the sense of 'self' proposed earlier in this section (as being distinct from and possibly preceding 'identity') and may include attributes that Rossan argues are only partly in awareness, such as 'being a 'woman' or a 'Catholic'. Over the course of time, elements from pervasive, long-lasting roles (such as 'husband' or 'wife') can be integrated into this core. The new sub-identity of 'husband' or 'wife' on the marriage day, for example, gradually becomes part of the person's fundamental sense of self.

In the context of this study, it is argued that the learning encountered in the sub-identity of 'student' gradually becomes assimilated into the individual's 'core' sense

of who and what the person is. The hypotheses are intended to reflect this process. Rossan argues that it is probably elements from the core and to some extent the generalised traits that contribute heavily to a person's sense of continuity. 'Warm, caring' and 'woman' will be continuing attributes, whereas sub-identities will change more frequently.

Rossan points out that many forces affect identity and that major changes occur as a result of experiences in adulthood as well as in childhood. She identifies seven major sources of identity in adulthood. These sources, accompanied by Rossan's own comments, are given below:

1) Reflected appraisals

> In interaction, a participant behaves in ways which communicate his or her attitudes about the other to him or her. The other, it is assumed, internalises these communicated attitudes and responds to self as others have responded in the past (ibid; 307).

This notion of 'reflected appraisals' has already been referred to. Rossan draws attention to the 'internalisation' of the attitudes. In cognitive terms, this can be seen as building cognitive structures and adding information to the individual's self-schema, or 'package of knowledge' about the self.

2) Outcome of role negotiation

Rossan comments that a second important variable influencing identity takes as its model "an active, potent controlling human being". She adds:

> A person has expectations which he or she tries to enforce, about how self and role partner are to think, act and feel. The partner has expectations about own and partner's behaviour as well. The partners must negotiate the appropriate overt and covert behaviours for both of them (308).

Rossan refers specifically to 'partners' as a way of indicating how behaviour patterns become 'legitimised and habitualised' so that the person comes to see him or her self in terms of the qualities and evaluations inferred from the actions. Role negotiations, however, extend into all walks of life. Open Studies students and tutors, for example, would each have their own sets of expectations about behaviours and 'roles' within the classroom.

3) Social comparison

Rossan draws attention to other writers who emphasise the importance of comparing oneself with others in order to evaluate oneself. She remarks:

> These comparisons allow one to evaluate one's own (and one's partner's) current states, but they also suggest the possibility of change and the directions these changes could take, any one of which could reinforce or alter identity (309)

Through social comparison, the individual learns about the 'typicality' of his or her behaviours, but also the possibility for trying out new actions, based on the evaluation of others.

4) Setting of and reacting to personal standards

Rossan comments that this includes:

> ... the recognition of success and failure, meeting moral standards and acquiring skills and abilities. All of them entail the individual setting standards, then comparing the outcome with the original goals (309)

This is an important feature for Open Studies students, particularly those on certificated courses, who have the accreditation as a goal to be reached. It is equally important in a broader sense, of personal goals. Even without certification, students set and try to meet their own, personal standards.

5) Interpretations of bodily change

Rossan points to the recognition by theorists of the importance of the physical and physiological changes occurring at various points in life (particularly adolescence) and adds that there are anatomical and physiological changes during adulthood as well, including changes in shape, weight, texture of skin and hair, amount of bodily hair, athletic and sexual abilities, and the lengths and types of illness (ibid; 310). Although references were made to physical appearance during interviews, this was not a dimension pursued in this research, since it was not felt to be particularly appropriate.

6) Cognitive complexity

> People think of themselves in different ways. They may be able to tolerate more or less ambiguity in their identities. They may be happy to recognise contradictory traits in themselves, or they may strive towards cognitive consistency (ibid; 310).

As previously indicated, cognitive complexity provides an underlying theme running through this study, and it is returned to in more detail later in the context of analysing students' interview data.

7) Current identity

One's current identity may affect one's future identity.

> Current identity may help to determine the roles to which on aspires, the kinds of negotiations about roles which one enters, as well as the outcome of such negotiations, may influence the interpretations of the appraisals of others and one's feelings about these appraisals (310).

Rossan's model is helpful in that it suggests both structure (core, generalised traits and sub-identities) and process (the way in which identity develops from various sources)

in a comprehensive way. For this study, it provides the framework for the research, suggesting themes for a focused interview schedule and an interpretive approach to the interview data. This helps to provide an organisational system using Rossan's categories, while allowing flexibility to accommodate individual differences. The methodology, results and discussion are presented in the following sections.

PART 2

RESEARCH: METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

CHAPTER 3

6. Hypotheses and method.

This chapter is divided into two parts: (1) *methodology* and (2) *results*. The first part on methodology is sub-divided into two sections as follows:

i) Hypotheses: the rationale, an outline of the rationale behind each hypothesis and a brief description of the type of information each was expected to yield. This is intended to assist understanding of the assumptions behind the data collection and analysis.

ii) Methodology: the research, which describes the research procedure itself, including *sample population, selection, research design* and *method of analysis*. First, to the hypotheses.

1) Hypotheses: the rationale

Since this is a qualitative piece of research, and any 'change' in students is not being measured in terms of statistical significance, this section describes the kind of data the hypotheses were expected to generate, and how this data could be meaningfully analysed. The hypotheses themselves, as with Rossan's (1987) model of identity, were constructed as a guide to investigation, seeking a broad, contextually-rich depiction of adult student experience, rather than attempting to reveal any underlying, objective and definable 'truth'. Yet although richly qualitative, it is also intended that the information should stimulate further interest and possible research into the relationship

between identity and Open Studies. For this reason, the research design was not simply 'left open', but cohered to an overall structure and direction guided by the hypotheses. Different elements of the methodology have varying strengths and weaknesses, and different levels of success. These are discussed later. The overall design, however, mixing a familiar method (interviewing students over a period of time) with more novel approaches ('life diagram' and drawing on a broader range of students outside the main cohort) was intended to present a useful and challenging approach that would yield contextually rich detail but which could also be adapted by others.

The hypotheses, with a comment on how they relate to the study and the sort of evidence expected to be generated, are given below. The phrase 'type of evidence' has been used to indicate the kind of information used in analysing the results. The research is based largely on in-depth interviews with students. The 'type of evidence,' therefore, is basically the content of verbal reports. What is intended is to identify elements within the verbal reports that reflect the impact of the course on different aspects of the students' lives and their thinking, in addition to any other more obvious changes that might be relevant (such as change of job or lifestyle) and which the student could attribute to the course.

The term 'student' is used as a convenient 'catch-all' to denote individuals attending Open Studies courses led by a tutor and formally administered through Warwick University's Continuing Education department. Adults returning to part-time study do not always think of themselves as being a 'student', however, but as individuals 'continuing to learn'. This point was not only made by two Open Studies students participating in this study, but also at a Warwick University day conference, where it

was reported that part-time students 'did not necessarily feel themselves to be a student' (Spencer, 1994). Rather, the 'students' considered themselves to be:

> ... resourceful, mature adults with an 'adult approach' to matters ... Being older and more mature they felt they had a responsibility to 'sort things out'. They felt that part of what they were doing was to use their own experience for the benefit of others (ibid).

The differences between full and part-time students are not explored in this study, but awareness of the possible connotations attached to the concept of 'student' provides insight into the fact that adults attending courses on a part-time basis may see their function - and their relationship to tutors and other students - differently to full-time students, and that the term 'student' cannot simply be taken as a given form of identification. It would seem that adults value their 'maturity', experience and existing state of knowledge and expect this to be taken into consideration. (In contrast, it must also be borne in mind that some adults do see themselves very much as students, and especially enjoy the even broader conception of being a student both 'of life' and 'for life'. Some are consciously aware of, and welcome the fact that, 'learning never stops' and deliberately set out to continue learning.).

In addition to focusing on the question of identity, the data was expected to generate insights into and reveal implications for the practice of adult education. It might be, for example, that greater awareness of student experience and needs on the part of the tutor, and how the students themselves felt they could contribute to the learning process, would lead to greater empathy with the students, leading to increased student satisfaction and more effective teaching. In particular, the findings were expected to reveal ways in which Open Studies have influenced individuals' sense of themselves, and the implications of this for education; for to teach adults well

involves not only philosophical issues pertaining to the goals and purposes of adult education, but also 'assumptions about the characteristics of adults as learners and how instruction should relate to those characteristics, if at all' (Hayes, 1993; 173). Given the difficulties in defining the concept of 'adult', as described earlier, relating teaching to any assumed adult characteristics is no easy task.

These and related issues arise during the course of this study, and are explored through the hypotheses. As well as Rossan's model of identity which has influenced the fundamental shape and nature of this research, additional and related theoretical orientations have been drawn upon in the formulation of the hypotheses, notably Habermas's (1971) differentiation of three generic areas in which human interest generates knowledge, and Mezirow's notion of perspective transformation (as discussed in Chapter 1). Habermas's three areas are:

> 1) the area of 'work', involving instrumental action to control or manipulate the environment, exemplified by the empirical-analytical sciences (e.g. physics, geology);
>
> 2) the 'practical' area, involving interaction to clarify the conditions for communication and intersubjectivity, exemplified by the historical-interpretive sciences (e.g. history, theology. descriptive social sciences);
>
> 3) the 'emancipatory' area, involving an interest in self-knowledge and self-reflection, exemplified by the critical social sciences (e.g. psychoanalysis, the critique of ideology).

In particular, distinction between 'instrumental' and 'emancipatory' education has influenced the perception of courses, with Labour Studies being regarded as more

'instrumental', because of their close relationship with the world of work, and Women's Studies and Counselling as more 'emancipatory', because of the assumed interest in 'self-knowledge', 'self-reflection' and 'personal development'. The distinction between 'instrumental' and 'emancipatory' areas is particularly salient in hypothesis 5, with its emphasis on the differential effect of the courses.

The influence of Mezirow, himself drawing on Habermas, also underpins the study, in that it is assumed that over the course of the two years, student perspectives will have changed - or in Mezirow's terminology, 'transformed'. This complements Rossan's (1987) idea that the core self can change over time, with elements of sub-identities becoming incorporated into the 'core'. Additional dimensions, then, complement Rossan's model of identity in order to explore the dynamic experience of adults on Open Studies courses. The hypotheses, based on this 'dynamic' model of identity, are presented below:

Hypothesis 1

Knowledge gained as a result of the learning experience arising from the course will become incorporated into the students' experience of themselves as individuals - that is, it will become 'internalised', rather than remaining 'external' to the student - and to that extent will impact on the student's sense of self. This will involve changes in perspective and the students' sense of 'who they are'.

Comment:

It is assumed that although the 'student' sub-identity will continue, as the course progresses, so the content of the course will become more comprehensible and

meaningful to the individuals involved. They will be able to relate it more to their own knowledge and experience. In this way, the content of the course becomes more 'assimilated' into the 'core' sense self. Extending Piaget's notion of an organism interacting with its environment and progressing in a differentiated and structural way, this assumes that (postformal) cognitive development continues into adulthood. Some new knowledge will be acquired that will not have a major impact on individual's sense of self, since it is possible for individuals to have an experience upon which they do not reflect, so that they 'may not develop or mature as a result' (Jarvis, 1986; 108). However, because of the nature of the courses, it is assumed that there will be a significant level of learning that will alter student's perceptions, and so change their view of themselves. The knowledge will be 'assimilated' in the sense that it will add to the person's stock of schemas, or mental representations. These changed or new representations will alter the student's perspective on him or her self.

Type of Evidence:

A student who knows little or nothing about the content of the course at the outset being able fluently to discuss concepts by the end of the course and exhibit understanding of those concepts as they relate to his or her life. Relating to a student's life is taken to mean more than simply being able to reiterate what was learned on the course, but how that learning has become 'embedded' in the life of the individual, so that he or she can apply it in an 'instrumental' sense, say, in the workplace or in an 'emancipatory' sense, in that the student is more critically aware of the perspectives that have been studied and is able to reflect in an informed way upon his/her own circumstances as a result. Alternatively, knowledge gained reinforces and extends

existing perceptions but also stimulates awareness of these in relation to previous thinking and alternative views. From this point of view, perspectives and concepts studied on the course are seen as being related to, and deepening, prior knowledge.

Hypotheses 2

Because of the nature of the courses, providing structured learning over an extended period of time, completion will increase students' critical awareness of themselves and how they relate to others, enabling them to articulate:

a) their sense of distinctness from others

b) their sense of commonality with others, in terms of shared experience and knowledge

c) their sense of continuity of personal development.

Comment:

Two of elements of this hypothesis (a) and (b) have been derived loosely from Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory, which includes an individuality corollary (persons differ from each other in their construction of events) and a commonality corollary (to the extent that one person employs a construction of experience which is similar to that employed by another, his psychological processes are similar to those of the other person). A construct, for Kelly, meant 'placing an interpretation.' And the concept of a 'construct' was later defined as a 'way in which some things are interpreted as being alike and at the same time different from other things.' (Bannister and Mair, 1968: 13). This hypothesis extends the first, in which the emphasis is on the individual, to a notion of the individual relating to others. It assumes purposeful involvement and reflexivity

on the part of the student, since to distinguish 'sameness' and 'difference' requires interpretation, a cognitive process. Reflexivity is seen in terms of 'standing back' and thinking about a situation, a consequence of which is that ' ... not only can we think of our own personal world as if it were that of someone else, we can also think of someone else's world as if it were our own.' (Stevens, 1985: 38). Individuals will be capable of making such differentiations in the normal course of their lives, but the assumption here is that the structured nature of the courses, and the fact that students are guided through possibly new material by tutors, will enhance student's critical awareness in a fundamental way; that is, the knowledge is gradually and methodically reinforced over a period of time. The final element (c) indicates that although differentiated and more mature critical awareness may develop, there will remain an overall sense of continuity and identity ' ... a specific sense of consciousness associated with a sense of self' (Stevens, 1985: 39); that is, it is assumed that students will be able to articulate changes in their thinking, and be able to relate these to earlier values, attitudes or beliefs.

Type of evidence:

Remarks and actions which indicate heightened awareness of 'sameness', 'difference' and 'continuity' in terms of how they draw distinctions between themselves and others, how they perceive shared concerns and how they relate current and past activities. There may be a development from 'mother looking after husband and children' for instance to a woman who is now 'politically aware' as a result of concepts learned on the course, thus engendering a sense of 'sharing', with others in a similar situation, and a more differentiated awareness of social and psychological constraints, giving rise to

greater insight into the 'differences' between groups and individuals and their circumstances.

Hypothesis 3

As a result of the acquisition of key concepts and associated language presented on the course, students will be able to confidently articulate those concepts when related to the broader context of their lives outside the course.

Comment

The first two hypotheses focus on the development of the individual and relationship to others, mainly in the context of the Open Studies courses. Hypothesis 3 broadens the 'epistemological base', so that in acquiring 'ownership' of the new knowledge, it is assumed that students will be able to apply it more broadly to other areas of their lives. In other words, they will be able to relate what they have learned to wider and more varying contexts. It is assumed that the greater sense of differentiation and critical awareness actually contributes to the sense of identity, since the individual becomes more competent at manipulating a wider range of concepts and is able to make choices between these concepts, thus constructing his or her own perspective.

A corollory of this is that identity is seen as a process, constantly revised, rather than an entity, permanently fixed. Being able to 'confidently articulate' the concepts learned on the course, therefore, implies more than simply having remembered what they are. Allman (1983: 117) has discussed the process whereby many learners 'form a commitment' to particular explanations rather than others. Forming such a commitment requires making a choice between possibly competing but equally applicable alternatives. Choosing between alternatives suggests a 'relativistic' mode of thinking.

Being able to confidently articulate certain concepts related to the course of study, then, suggests both commitment to particular explanations and a critical 'relativistic' awareness of that explanation compared to alternatives. Making a commitment to a particular explanation, however, does not mean simply choosing as if between inanimate objects 'out there', distinct and separate from the individual. For 'commitment' is also related to the salience, or importance, of identity, or particular identities, since "... the degree to which the individual's relationships to specified sets of other persons depends on his or her being a particular kind of person" (Stryker, 1981: 24). Commitment "provides a way of conceptualizing "society's" relevance for interaction, doing so by pointing to social networks - the number of others to whom one relates through the occupancy of a given position", (ibid: 24). In other words, the individual has a preference for, or makes a commitment to, one set of explanations over another. That commitment will be based on the type of person the individual is. The explanations themselves will be derived from the social context in which the individual finds himself and relates to. Assimilation of concepts from the course, it is assumed, will give students wider understanding of their lives in general, not simply knowledge of those concepts in particular.

Type of evidence:

Someone is able to see his or her role (or sub-identity) - and relationships with others - in a new way, giving insight into both the individual's and others' behaviour or position in society. This will be through reported changes in attitude or activity either in the home, at work or other social environment. The student may be able to apply

particular perspective derived from the course to a specific area of his or her job, for instance.

Hypothesis 4

An effect of the learning process, and the internalisation of new knowledge, will be cognitive dissonance, which tends to be accompanied by unsettling emotions such as anxiety, anger, frustration and confusion. Resolution of this dissonance, however, will impact upon the students' sense of identity in that it will lead to positive self-regard and contribute to the individual's changing perspectives and sense of well-being.

Comment

This hypothesis focuses on the experience of learning the students are likely to encounter. It draws on More's (1974) suggestion that in the learning process, people pass through different stages, from intellectual awareness, through emotional responses - and an increased awareness of these as they are brought to the attention of the intellect - and finally, resolution of the learning conflict as new knowledge is assimilated. The hypothesis embodies the concepts of 'cognitive dissonance' (Festinger, 1957) an imbalance in cognitive functioning as new learning takes place, and 'disjunction' (Weil, 1993), or 'feeling at odds with oneself' as the interaction between past and present, what is known and what is to be known, makes itself felt through the process of learning. Anxiety, a general lack of confidence in the self and an unrealistic appraisal of personal abilities and intellectual products are not uncommon effects of learning (Stanton, 1981; Powell, 1981). The hypothesis also points to the notion of cognitive complexity in individuals, and the ability to cope with contradictions. The

management of disjunction may be more challenging for some learners and relate to many factors, including the degree of continuity between the new learning experience and earlier ones, ways in which social differences and power relations are experience and managed in the learning environment, and the extent to which the core aspects of the individual's personal and social identity are felt to be under threat (Weil, 1993; 162).

Type of evidence

Students report discomfort, frustration, anger, or lack of confidence with difficult aspects of the course, surprise and disbelief that they are perhaps not doing as well as they expected, anxiety because they are unable to absorb certain material or boredom because the material is too advanced or not stimulating enough. These effects may manifest themselves in such events as falling behind with work, scoring low marks (say in projects or assignments), failing to read course books. Resolution of the conflict, or dissonance, however, in the sense of assimilating new information, or understanding a new concept, will result in a feeling of achievement and a change of perspective, including the dimensions outlined in hypotheses 1 - 3.

Hypothesis 5

Because of the different nature of the courses, there will be a differential effect on people's sense of identity. More specifically, the hypothesis is that the more 'emancipatory' nature of Women's Studies and Counselling courses will result in relatively greater change in the 'core' sense of self.

Comment

The assumption is that a course such as Labour Studies will be 'instrumental' in that it is likely to attract students as part of their employment. The subject matter, too, it is assumed, will be less personal, and more related to institutional functioning (eg business operations, industrial relations) than say, Counselling, which deals with a therapeutic situation and calls directly on personal skills, ultimately on a one-to-one basis in a counselling situation, or Women's Studies and Psychology, which because of their focus, will attract students desiring to change, understand interpersonal relations or gain insight into themselves. For these reasons, these courses are assumed to be more 'emancipatory'. This is not to say there will be no personal development across all courses, however. There is a sense in which, traditionally, all adult education aims at personal growth (Parrott, 1985), although there are newer courses which take the view that personal development becomes an end in itself and a 'teachable process'. People who attend these courses " ... are likely to be searching not just for knowledge but for change" (ibid). Furthermore, adult learning cannot be separated from the life and the life history of the adult person (Finger, 1988; 33). For the purposes of this study, however, the Counselling and Women's Studies courses are regarded as being at the emancipatory 'personal development' end of the spectrum.

Type of evidence:

Students report different degrees of change, either in their own attitudes or in actual physical changes in their lives (eg change of job) in which the learning on the course has been seen to play a significant part. It is assumed that change in Labour Studies students will be more related to their job (instrumental), change in the Women's

Studies, Counselling (and Psychology group) will be more 'personal' and possibly related to relationships (emancipatory).

Sample population

Three categories of student were included in this research:

Category 1

A main cohort of 23 Open Studies students, 19 of whom were interviewed twice over a two-year period. These form the central focus of the study.

Category 2

Twenty-four students on two Open Studies psychology courses, who did not undergo in-depth interviews, but who discussed during night class many of the issues raised.

Category 3

Post-graduate research and other Open Studies students and their tutors, during seminars and other informal discussion groups. These do not form a substantial component of the study, but provide contextual material as and when necessary. In this way they not only contribute to primary source material, drawn from ongoing activities in Warwick University's Continuing Education department, but also help to create a more 'rounded picture' of experience on Open Studies courses. The inclusion of additional students, providing a broader perspective on experience, also relates to methodological questions of validity and reliability, since they provide a wider student 'reference group'.

The breakdown of students by course, gender and average age at the first interview [shown in square brackets] is as follows:

Category 1

Certificated courses:

Labour Studies, 4 men [47]

Women's Studies, 4 women [40]

Counselling, 5 women [43]

Non-certificated:

Self-help Psychology Group, 4 women, 1 man [41]

Various: 4 women, 1 man [40]

Category 2

Non-certificated, short course:

Psychology groups, 22 women, 2 men [42]

Category 3

Post-graduate research and other Open Studies students [Average age unknown].

Certificated courses were chosen as the main focus because of the length of time students would be undertaking their study. Although the number of interviewees actually on certificated courses was relatively low (13), the assumption was that there would be a more discernible impact over the time period of two years than over the usual self-contained six or 10-week course. Four other students from the certificated

courses who intially expressed interest in the project later changed their mind and did not wish to participate.

The other two groups of students in the main cohort (self-help psychology and various), while not undertaking certificated courses, were included and interviewed twice for several reasons. Prior to the main research a pilot study was conducted. Students on a psychology night class participated in that study. It was learned during that time that a small group of the class were launching their own self-help psychology group as a direct result of the Open Studies course. Since the research was concerned with the impact of Open Studies on individual lives, it was felt that it would be of value to include these students and follow their progress. At the time of writing, the group was still operational.

The final group of students in this category (labelled 'various') were also initially part of the original psychology group, but had expressed interest in pursuing other Open Studies courses and possibly undertaking certificated courses. Since their plans for taking Open Studies courses seemed to be longer term, it was felt these students might offer useful additional data to compare with the certificated students over the same period.

While students in categories 2 and 3 did not constitute 'control' groups, in the scientific sense of carefully selected samples not exposed to the 'test situation', they were included in the research design to provided 'reference groups' against which to set the experience of the main cohort. A 'reference group' designates " ... the group to which an individual orients himself, regardless of actual membership" (Singer, 1981). In this instance, 'reference group' is taken not just to mean the group with which the individual identifies, but as helping to provide comparative material in order to

establish an orientation to the study as a whole. In other words, it is a 'cross reference' between individuals and groups in order to contextualise the experience of individual students and provide an 'internal' check, or 'triangulation'. Raising the issues with a wider range of students provides one way of obtaining a general feel for the reliability and validity of the interview data. In this way, individual experience becomes 'relatable' (Bell, 1987: 7-8) - rather than generalizable - to the experiences of others. Some of the difficulties of learning, particularly the frustrations of encountering new work, meeting deadlines, and fitting study around other commitments and interests, for example, seemed common experiences.

Discussions with the psychology groups (category 2) took place during night-class sessions. The aim was to obtain material in a relaxed group setting. No attempt was made to monitor the progress of individual students outside the night-class environment. This would have been beyond the scope and resourcing of the research programme. Material from post-graduate and other Open Studies students was obtained from seminars and other meetings. Workshops on adults and learners (Field, 1989) and age and ageing (Schuller, 1989a) for example, yielded views relevant to the research. Groups ranged in size from nine to around 30, and represented a wide range in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and social and educational background. The aim was not to make a detailed study of these groups, but to note relevant material as and when it arose. Some informal, individual interviews were conducted in this context. This broader element to the research was conducted in the form of participant observation, in which the researcher was involved in the activity being observed. Where comments were made in a public, or group context - such as during a seminar or workshop - students were not informed that their remarks might be included in a research project.

This was partly due to practical considerations. Because of the nature of the situation, it would not have been possible to inform each and every individual that their remarks might be used in a research context. Furthermore, it was not a formalised research situation. The whole point was to participate in the activity, while observing and noting salient points, if any.

Recording (as fieldnotes) the comments of other students helped to contextualise the interview material. In this way, the experience of the main group of students could be related to a wider student population. The observations of these additional students do not form a substantial body of the study, but do serve to underpin some of the general themes, as well as specific detail. Quotations are used from these students to illustrate points throughout the text where appropriate.

Excluding the post-graduate research students, whose ethnic and gender mix was greatest, all Open Studies students but one who participated in the research were white. They were predominantly female (as indicated in the category breakdowns) with mainly middle-class professional backgrounds, although not in all cases. Although this appears to fit the stereotype of the white, middle-class female student, this was not by design. Choice of student emerged out of the type and availability of certificated course running at the time, the selection procedure, which is discussed below, and general accessibility to students.

Although consideration was given to possibly achieving a more balanced mix, this was not pursued, since the breakdown by race and gender accurately reflected the population of the groups studied. Two of the groups were all female, for example. The post-graduate research and other students, however, with their greater ethnic and gender mix, did help to provide a broader view of student experience.

At the start of the research, only four Open Studies certificated courses were available. In addition to those studied, was Archaeology. Initially, the intention had been to include students from this course. But organisational problems in setting up the course meant it was difficult to access students. Names were not known when initial enquiries were made. Later contact with the tutor revealed that of those who had registered at that time, at least two were other Open Studies tutors. While the Archaeology tutor was eager to assist in the research programme, there nevertheless continued to be difficulties in contact with the tutor and accessing students. A decision was made to omit this group from the study.

Selection.

After the relevant course tutors were identified through Warwick University's Continuing Education department, initial contact was made by telephone. Meetings were arranged to discuss the project with the tutor either before the start of the course or in one of the early lessons. Once permission had been obtained from the tutor, a description of the research project was verbally given to students in the classroom, and volunteers sought. Some responded immediately, others required time to consider the proposal. The best immediate response was from the Counselling students, with the whole group of about 15 putting their names to the list. The four Labour Studies volunteers were eager to participate, although a further student in the group was quite firmly against the idea. The Women's Studies studies tutors were initially cautious, but eventually helpful and supportive in terms of accessing students. The caution seemed to be reflected in the students themselves. As a group they were not so forthcoming as

the Counselling students, but those who did volunteer were equally committed. There was a mixed response from the Psychology group, with some students putting themselves forward, and others seeming uneasy about the suggestion.

Because of the relatively low numbers in the main cohort all those who volunteered were interviewed, apart from the Counselling group, from which five names were selected at random. This was to try to retain a balance between the number of students from each group. Originally it was hoped to obtain at least five, and ideally more, from each. Although low numbers attending (eg on the Labour Studies) and other students not wishing to participate prevented a larger cohort being obtained, around four or five students from each course was obtained.

Research design:

Interview

The main cohort of 23 Open Studies students was interviewed over a period from 1989 -1992. Other material continued to be gathered less formally from post-graduate and other Open Studies students until 1994. Nineteen students were interviewed twice. (Of those not interviewed again, at least two had moved home, out of the area altogether, and attempts to contact a third student were unsuccessful). An additional student was also interviewed. She had been in the original psychology group but had initially not wished to participate in the research. She had 'gained confidence' in the intervening two years, however, which she attributed to her study meetings (two other students independently confirmed this growth of confidence) and volunteered to be interviewed. Since the research is about the impact of Open Studies on individuals, her

experience was regarded as relevant, and her remarks have been included in the study. A total of 20 students, therefore, participated in the second round of interviews. Interviews lasted a minimum of 90 minutes. The first interview took place at or near the beginning of the course, in order to assess student expectations for the forthcoming two years. The second interview was conducted once students had completed the course. This was in order that they could report on their experiences. The two sets of data could then be compared.

The second interview followed the same structure as the first, except for some minor amendments to take account of the passage of time (eg instead of asking about expectations of the course, the question was about experiences on the course, and whether expectations had been met). Rossan's (1987) sources of identity provided a guide to the structuring of the interview questions. For instance the idea of Social Comparison prompted questions such as 'Do you ever compare yourself with others?' and 'What qualities do you most admire in others?' calling for a mix of direct and more oblique and reflective answers.

The interview itself comprised a series of pre-determined questions with subsidiary probes (See Appendix A) but with flexibility to allow for individual differences. This meant each student underwent the same set of interview questions, yet could answer in his or her own way. Subsidiary questions such as 'Could you elaborate on that, please?' enabled students to give more in-depth and idiosyncratic answers to the same set of questions. By this means, comparable data across students was obtained, without losing the individuality of each. This would be different, say, for a survey-type questionnaire, where students might be required to make 'closed' responses by ticking pre-determined answers or categories, with only limited scope for personal expression.

The interviews were conducted at a time and place chosen by the student. Most were in the late afternoon or evening at the student's own home, although some were in other locations such as the Arts Centre at Warwick University, the restaurant of a sports centre and a recreation park. Each interview was tape-recorded with the permission of the student. The recorder was visible throughout the interviews. Written notes were also made. The researcher wore similar clothes - light shirt, jacket or coat and tie - on each occasion. The interviews were conducted in a friendly, relaxed manner, with the students put at their ease. Although it was explained that the interview would last up to 90 minutes, the students were allowed to answer in their own time and no attempt was made to terminate the session before the student was ready. A friendly but relatively neutral approach was adopted when interviewing, with as little interjection as possible. This was in order for the students to 'speak for themselves'. It was explained to the students that the interviews were part of a research project into experience of Open Studies courses, and how the courses affected them and would be written up for a PhD. Assurance was given that any of the actual written notes or tape-recordings - in the sense of their being primary 'raw data' - would remain confidential (that is, they would not be played or shown to a third party), and that the student's real names would not be used in the write-up. Some students did not object to their names being used, but it was felt better to adopt a general policy at the outset to save confusion or embarrassment at a later stage. It was assumed that, because of the in-depth nature of the interviews, some of the material could be sensitive. The students' names, therefore, were changed for use in this report.

Diary

Students were asked if they would keep a diary of their study activities. This was in the form of prepared information sheets noting the amount of time devoted each week to reading, writing and other activities (which might have included fieldwork or visits. See Appendix B). Time spent on the different activities was recorded by ticking boxes. There was also space for students to add comments if they wished. Points for consideration were suggested. For example, was the work relatively difficult or easy? Was it more or less time consuming than expected? Was anger or frustration experienced at any stage and, if so, how was this overcome? The intention was to engage the students in the monitoring process and help provide triangulation. The diary sheets were to complement other data. As each course finished, students were to return the sheets, and a fresh batch would be posted to them. Although not without value, since it did reveal something of the experience of the students, this was the least successful research method. While students originally agreed to keep the diary, they came to feel that it was time-consuming and were unable to continue. This result is discussed later.

Life diagram.

A third instrument was a 'life diagram'. (See Appendix C). This was a simple typed instruction on an A-4 sheet of paper for students to draw a diagram in any way they wished, to illustrate their life from birth to the present and looking ahead to the future. Students were asked to include any significant events or 'stages' in their lives and to mark their current position on the diagram. A second sheet was provided with space to write brief notes, including comments on periods of stability and crisis, and how

feelings about these might have changed over time. The 'life diagram' was grounded in similar approaches conducted in other educational or therapeutic settings, such as Open Studies (Schuller, 1989b) or the Open University (Stevens, 1985: 54), particularly in respect of reflecting upon the ageing process. In this way, while being a novel approach to investigating student experience, it was nevertheless derived from existing practice. It further drew on Erikson's model of the life cycle, with its focus on periods of stability and transition through 'crisis' (Erikson, 1968). The aim was to investigate student life-experience in relation to the decision to pursue Open Studies at this particular point in their lives. It was assumed there would be a 'projective' quality to the diagrams, enabling students to give a different and more immediate representation of their lives than they might if they were using merely the spoken or written word. Students were allowed half an hour to complete the task. Most were completed in the classroom in the presence of the course tutor. A small number were completed in the students' home before the first interview took place. The life diagram was a successful device, although - as discussed later - not quite as anticipated.

All the instruments were piloted with Open Studies psychology students and amendments made in the light of comments before being used in the research.

Method of analysis

Interviews

The data was analysed in several ways. First, the interviews were transcribed. Even after transcription, the tapes were listened to frequently. This is because the printed word does not always convey the nuance of the spoken word. A hesitation, an

inflection, a particular tone of voice can convey meaning not captured on the page. Indeed, what reads like spontaneously natural speech is a highly conventionalized reconstruction (Atkinson, 1992; 26). The aim was to attempt to create a faithful representation of student experience. By returning to the tapes, what was written could be carefully checked against what was spoken, and a 'feel' retained for what was being said by listening to the words directly. This would be different to, say, a coded analysis where a code would be assigned to the transcript, and then used for further analysis without needing to return to the tapes. The steps of analysis were as follows:

Step 1: transcribing interviews, categorizing responses.

The interviews were transcribed and the responses written under each question. The interview questions became the initial categories for organising the data. Below is an example, showing the answers of two students from the counselling course (at Interview 1, beginning of course):

Q: Did you have any concerns before starting the course?

Sally: I would say excited. With doing different courses now and getting over that anxiety, and expecting to feel anxious and, you know, 'Will I do all right?' And excited, you know, 'Who will be on the group? What will the tutor be like? ... It had to be within an easy area. Easy to get to. It had to be accessible.

Teresa: I was very concerned about whether I'd actually be able to cope, whether I'd let myself be knocked down and not pick myself up and get on with it again. I was quite apprehensive and very insecure.

The process of transcription and categorizing responses under the questions was repeated for both sets of interviews. Below is an example of responses to a question in Interview 2:

Q. How did you get on with the course?

Sally: I completed the course and passed the examination ... I found there were a lot of things happening in my life in that year. Illness and bereavement in the family. Also, I took on another course and had a secondment to a different post. And all these things were happening at the same time, so it was quite difficult focusing on the course. But I'm glad to say that I did manage to finish it and pass the examination. So I'm pleased with that.

Teresa: I got on fairly well with the course. I enjoyed it, although we had difficulties because we changed tutors half way through ... which caused, I think, myself and several other people quite a bit of trouble ... It was actually the change of tutor and change of style ... Also we learned that we were to have an exam at the end of the year, which we hadn't appreciated at the outset ... and, in fact, was something new to this particular course ... At first I was fairly resigned to the fact although there was quite an upset about it ... on the course ... (but) I have actually thought about going on to do the part time degree.

Arranging the data in this way provided basic, accessible information about student expectations and experiences over the two-year period. It enabled analysis of both individual student progress and comparison between students.

Step 2: Individual accounts.

The second step was to compare the data from both interviews for each individual, to gain an overview of each student's experience. By examining the answers to interviews 1 and 2, elements of change could be detected. In the above extracts, for instance, Sally was excited at the prospect of taking the course, and was looking forward to

meeting new students and the tutors. By the end of the course, she had suffered a stressful year, with bereavement in the family, extra studying and change at work. It had been a difficult time, although she was pleased at finally completing the course.

Teresa was apprehensive and very insecure to begin with, and wondered whether she would be able to 'pick herself up' if she found she was unable to cope. By the end of the course, however, despite a difficult second year, with the disruption of a change of tutors and discovering there was an exam - which had upset the group as a whole - she had emerged with confidence and was now contemplating embarking upon a degree.

Step 3: Comparing accounts

Comparison was made *between* students on the same course. In the above quotations, for instance, it can be seen that two students had both similar and very different kinds of experience. Both undertook the same course and passed the final exam. Both had difficult years, but for different reasons. Yet they were very different individuals with different expectations at the outset (Sally was 'excited' and optimistic, Teresa was 'insecure' and not sure whether she would manage). By the end of the course, Sally's enthusiasm remained, but it had been tempered by the events of the year, while Teresa's confidence had grown and she was looking forward with optimism. This reveals the diversity of individual experience within any teaching group and the complexity of the task facing tutors in attempting to 'meet the needs' of the students and facilitate learning. Despite individual differences, however, a broad impression of whether the course had any impact could be gained by analysing the different interviews.

Step 4: Across the groups

As well as analysis of individual experience and comparison between individuals on the *same* course, comparison was also made between students on *different* courses. What was being sought were words or phrases which described how the individual felt about, and related to, the other students on his or her group, in order that meaningful comparisons could be made between groups. Since inter-relationship with others plays an important function in the construction of the 'self', it was assumed that the relationship with the 'reference group', i.e., the students' peers with whom the experience of the course was shared, would impinge on individual identity; on the one hand, there would not only be support for the learning in its own right, but an important social context in which the learning could take place. Learning is an individual endeavour (Rogers, 1989: 99) but does not occur in a social vacuum (Jarvis, 1983; 1985; 1987). On the other hand, this is not to assume that the individual would have to identify wholly with the group for personal identity to be enhanced. Identity is derived from difference as well as similarity (Gray and McGuigan, 1993; Hall, 1993). Somebody's feeling 'different' from the rest of the group would not imply they had no identity; indeed, it could enhance their sense of 'who they are' precisely *because* of the contrast. However, simply taking individual case studies in isolation from the context in which they evolved would have meant adopting too abstract an approach and distorting one 'reality' of Open Studies, which is that individuals attend classes and learn in the company of others. Being with a group is part of the appeal. One of the aims of the analysis, then, was to establish a broad picture of experience across the groups. From this, more general themes began to emerge; whether, for example, one

group of students seemed to 'get on better' and form closer relationships than another as, for example, reported in the following:

> *Women's Studies*:
>
> We sort of had quite a little support group in the end ... we would ring each other up ... We did start to stick together, really, which was very nice. We were all very close by the end of the course. The attitude was very open ... It was very good. (Beth).

> *Labour Studies*:
>
> Everybody was interested ... and decided to take the examination. The certificate in Labour Studies was very good ... When the other people were discussing, they were practical ... They were very friendly. (Leon).

> *Counselling*:
>
> The group ... didn't come together in the second year ... about six weeks before the end of the course, one of the women stood up and gave a passionate outburst about how she hated the course and felt alienated by everybody ... And I was absolutely staggered, because I didn't realise what was going on ... I don't think the course gelled. (Ellie).

By drawing broader comparisons, total reliance on individual 'case studies' was avoided, and individual accounts could be set against a wider Open Studies context. This helped to establish a certain level of reliability of individual accounts. Although each student gave an individual 'narrative', there were nevertheless shared experiences. In some cases, the same issues emerged, even down to the same individual being mentioned independently by different students.

Step 5: Emerging themes: Sources of identity

In addition to analysing the data in term of individual experience, comparison between individuals within groups and comparison between groups, the interviews were also examined along the dimensions of the 'sources of identity' as described by Rossan (1987), that is, in terms of reflected appraisals, outcome of role negotiation, social comparison, setting of and reacting to personal standards, cognitive complexity and current identity.

Interpretation of bodily change was also included by Rossan, but not investigated in any depth in this study. It is acknowledged that awareness of the body and changes occurring to it are fundamental to individual identity (Young, 1989) - and some references to physiology and appearance were made during the interviews. Questions about 'body' and 'appearance' also raise important political, cultural and ideological issues (Steinam, 1984; Ardener, 1987; Jacobus et al, 1990; Greer, 1992) especially in terms of the representation of women (Davies et al, 1987). But this focus was not regarded as having the same relevance in the context of the Open Studies presented here as, for example, it did in Rossan's own study, in which she investigated the experience of expectant mothers. In this case, the effects of bodily change would be more pertinent.

The 'sources of identity' thus provided a framework for the interview, enabling a structured yet flexible approach to adult experience. They yielded both descriptive data and provided an analytical framework. They provided descriptive data in that answers given within the categories - current identity, for instance - provided a 'picture', or representation, of the individual at that moment. For example, the following extracts provide descriptive sketches of the 'current identity' of the individuals:

> I'm 40 years old, married with two children. They're 10 and 8. I have a very good relationship with my husband, who's very supportive. I feel we have a very balanced relationship, where he shares all the housework activities and things like that ... which enables me to work as a community midwife full time. (Sally)

> My name is ... I started off working life as a secretary and got 7 O-levels and 2 A-levels. Being of an era where women weren't encouraged to go to university I was persuaded that a secretarial course would be the best thing to do. I was a secretary for 10 years, then went into personnel. I did several personnel courses and become personnel manager ... Then I got married and had children ... I have two children, two girls, aged 16 and 15. (Ellie).

> I'm 41 and married with one boy, five years old ... I'm a trade union person ... staff representative and secretary of the branch ... I've been getting more involved in the union both within the company and the branch and when the (Labour Studies) course came it seemed very interesting in the topics it covered. (Sam).

Taken together, the categories construct a broad impression of the individuals. Across all the categories, a complex picture emerges. This is not just in terms of roles and behaviour, but also in attitudes and beliefs:

> I think I rejected all forms of imposed religion, and also I reached a stage where I just thought a lot of religions were hypocritical. So I prefer to do my own thing. I still have my own morals and values. (Sally).

But the categories also provide an analytical framework for assessing the impact of Open Studies on personal identity. By comparing the complex 'descriptions' from each interview, any changes to identity could be suggested, and possible conclusions drawn on how far these were due to the impact of the Open Studies. This was done by analysing both what the students explicitly stated, and what could be inferred, as being due to the course. For example, one student remarked in her second interview:

> The course has made me more aware of people's feelings and the need to listen carefully to what people say ...

In this case, the student is aware that some change has occurred and attributes some of that change to the effects of the course.

Alternatively, a student might not necessarily be describing directly any impact of the course, but the use of vocabulary and concepts would suggest that the course had influenced the student's thinking. For instance, at Interview 1, a student said:

> My husband and brothers dared me to do the course. They didn't think I would. They just ganged up one day ... they were throwing down the gauntlet ...and when I analysed it, I mean I run around after my husband and kept home, I run around after my little boy and I run around after two men at work. And I decided I was spending my life running around after men ... my husband had just got his degree. He'd studied for it part time ... I don't really know too much about Women's Studies

By Interview 2, she was reporting:

> I am aware of my own space, and demand it. I feel that women often end up in the marriage and children trap. But I feel I'm beginning to occupy my own space more. I feel I'm more of a person.

In this case, she is not explicitly stating that she has changed 'as a result' of the course, but the perspective offered - that of 'finding her own space' and 'becoming more of her own person' - suggests that there has been an increasing awareness of the role of women in general and of her own position within the family in particular. In the first interview she is 'responding' to the challenge of others. In this sense, she is dependent, in that others are 'setting the agenda'. By the second interview she has not only become more aware of her position, but is also more assertive and is 'initiating' action (she is 'demanding' her own space). Although the student reports cannot be taken at face value, since it is difficult to decide exactly what influences have contributed to change, the language used reflects certain experiences and in the broader context of the interview might reasonably be said to reflect some influence of the course. The last

student quoted, for example, did report that the course had influenced her thinking. The two-interview research design allows comparison between two different moments, and for some confidence to be invested in the findings.

Step 6: Emerging themes: additional concerns.

In addition to the sources of identity, the data was analysed to see if any further themes emerged which might contribute to the overall depiction of identity and understanding of student experience. In the event, themes did emerge - some more unexpected than others - that helped to enrich the model of identity, and bring a fuller dimension to the representation of student experience. In particular, these were: *adults' prior experience, bereavement, religion* and the *life experiences of men and women.* These are discussed later. They not examined in any depth, since the main aim is to consider the data in the light of the categories already outlined, but are presented as relevant issues emerging out of the study that would suggest fruitful areas for further research.

Step 7: Model of identity

The method of analysis thus far provides a way of organising and interpreting the data in the light of Rossan's *sources* of identity. Over and above this, however, is Rossan's (1987) *model* of identity with its key components of the *core, generalised traits* and *sub-identities.* While each of the 'sources of identity' is analysed on its own terms (that is, they provide different and intrinsically useful dimensions for investigating student experience), these are all seen within the context of the model of identity, which helps to integrate the various strands. The overall impact of Open Studies on the adult sense of identity, then, is regarded in terms of how it has affected the core, generalised traits

or sub-identities. A student's experience may be described in terms of 'social comparisons', or how the 'setting of personal standards' influenced performance, for instance. But the broader - and richer - significance of this emerges when set within the overall model of identity. The following quotation provides an example of how an individual might be said to be changing in a fundamental way (ie, at the *core*):

> Now I know I've only got to be responsible for me ... It's very difficult to say that a certain thing has happened. It's a gradual realisation, really. You're looking at something. You're seeing it wrong, then you're seeing it in the right perspective ... It's not like the road to Damascus. It's gradually ... you start to see things, and realise ...

These are the words of Kath, who had gained enough confidence over the two years as a result of belonging to the self-help Psychology group to volunteer to be interviewed for the research. (She had declined at the start of the study). There is a noticeable change in Kath's perception of herself, now depicted in a more positive light. Similarly, experience at the 'sources of identity' level is also interpreted in terms of the 'key components' of *sub-identities* (eg from 'housewife' to 'undergraduate') and *generalised traits.* (This dimension is peculiarly problematic. It was assumed that even if change occurred at the *core*, there would be little or no significant change in *generalised traits*, since it was felt that a 'warm and friendly' person was likely to remain warm and friendly across different sub-identities and in different contexts. This is not to imply that 'generalised traits' are immutable, however, and would not be amenable to change over a prolonged period or could necessarily resist illness or trauma. (See Poon, 1980; Bromley, 1988; Rosenfield, 1995).

Summary

To summarize, the interview texts were analysed using the steps outlined above,

looking for both individual experience and comparisons between individuals and groups within the context of Rossan's model of identity and its sources. The method of analysis was to examine the reports for both *explicit* comments regarding the possible impact of Open Studies, and for influences which had to be *inferred.* These inferences are based on comments which indicate some 'change' in lifestyle or perspective which seem to have been influenced by the course. While this relies heavily upon interpretation, that interpretation is guided by the hypotheses which have themselves been influenced by perspectives within the literature.

Although analysis of the data roughly followed the sequence as described above, the process of analysis was not as clear-cut as this might suggest. In some cases, several levels of analysis were occurring at once. In terms of cognitive complexity, for example, a student may be giving a self-description, but also making reference to his or her attitudes, values and beliefs, or personal standards, or comparison with other students, and expressing it in an idiosyncratic way (eg using elaborate sentences, with several sub-clauses, or shorter, direct phrases - all of which creates a general and complex impression of the individual, not simply along 'one dimension'). In this sense, while the categories provide a useful analytical framework for investigating particular dimensions of individual experience, that experience is nevertheless richer and more complex than the abstraction might imply, and student answers therefore can incorporate several layers of meaning, and relate to different categories at the same time. Rossan's overall model of identity and the theoretical orientation of regarding individuals in a 'holistic' sense, helps to locate these complexities within a broader context, and sustain the model of the complex, multi-faceted yet integrated individual.

7. Results

Of the 19 students interviewed twice, all reported some degree of change over the course of two years. This ranged from one student on the self-help Psychology group who had completely changed her lifestyle, from market researcher to aromatherapist, and which she attributed directly to the effect of her studies, through to a Labour Studies student, who felt the course had no impact whatsoever on his sense of self, but admitted that it had given him insight into politics and business. In this case, however, the student admitted that he enjoyed learning, and was constantly studying. It could be argued that the course had reinforced his sub-identity as a 'student', since this was an important part of his life, and the Labour Studies had helped not only to sustain the image, but also satisfy the 'need' to learn.

Below is a brief summary of the impact of the course on each student in the main categories: Labour Studies, Women's Studies, Counselling, self-help Psychology and 'various'. There is not space to discuss each individual in depth - each would make a case study in his or her own right - but the following conveys a broad sense of the effect of the courses. A fuller discussion follows in the next section.

Impact of course (based on the students' own comments and inferences drawn from the data):

Labour Studies:

Steve (47) *Union officer*

Heightened awareness of social roles and relationships in the workplace. Has changed working habits. Greater understanding of other people's difficulties.

Leon (65) *Boiler house worker*

Reported little impact of the course on 'self', but insight gained into politics and industrial relations. The course has also helped to sustain. Leon's image of himself as a continuing learner, which he values.

Dave (35) *Post-graduate student (full-time) Birmingham.*

Did not complete course. Labour Studies came at a time when Dave was reassessing his life and he felt the studies would help with this. Before the end of the course, had moved to continue full-time studies. Labour Studies had heightened awareness of role of women in industry. Dave felt he would like to pursue this further, since he felt women did not get a 'fair deal'.

Sam (41): *Union officer*

Course was more difficult than anticipated, but had given greater insight into his job as union officer and stimulated interest in further study. Registered for a degree. Had not 'changed his life' to any great extent, other than he was intending to continue studying at a higher level, which would inevitably impose its own pressures.

Women's Studies:

Karen (51) *Headteacher*

Did not complete course. Before the end had set off on travels with her husband as planned, which Karen, then retired, had described as a 'new phase' in her life. At the time of the first interview, the course was helping

Karen to develop long-term interests and extend 'historical' awareness. She had been interested in history since a child.

Debbie (34) *Personnel officer.*

Did not complete course. Reacted strongly to what she regarded as 'feminist' ideology, but confessed that the course had given her greater understanding of problems faced by women. Switched to business degree. Very strong-willed woman for whom studying and gaining professional qualifications was an important part of her life.

Beth (31) *Part-time secretary.*

Gained in confidence and awareness and 'found her own space'. Felt she had 'survived' the course, which she had used as a 'test' to see if she could sustain study. At time of writing, was reading for a degree. Had also developed an interest in politics.

Hilary (44) *Health visitor.*

Open Studies helped to put her interests into a broader, 'cultural'context, and related closely to her job as health visitor. Studies deepened her understanding of women's issues.. Was considering taking a degree.

Counselling:

Sally (40) *Midwife*.

Course not as expected, but important for different areas of her life. Sally was planning further study, perhaps a Masters degree, but the course was also intrinsically rewarding, as Sally could not envisage a time when studying was not part of her life.

Nicola (53) *College lecturer*.

Disappointed with course, but felt she had gained a lot from it. Important in terms of her longer-term goal which was to make wider use of her counselling skills. Related closely to Nicola's image of herself as a carer. Felt her learning had 'moved on'.

Lynda (31) *Acupuncturist*.

Felt the course had not prepared her sufficiently for counselling, which she wished to do. But had confirmed her interest in the subject. Was considering further courses in 'alternative' therapies. Course was helping her to 'sort out' what she wanted to do.

Teresa: (42) *Administrator for husband's computer firm.*

Found the course satisfactory, although was unsure how it would be of practical help in achieving her aim of becoming a counsellor. Was considering taken a part-time degree.

Ellie (49) *Hypnotherapist*.

Was glad she had taken the course, but felt the group failed to 'gel' and the course had not prepared her for counselling in the way she expected. Counselling relates to Ellie's sense of concern for others and wish to be of help.

Self-help Psychology:

Melanie (31) *Market Researcher.*

Transformation of life-style from market researcher to aromatherapist. Attributed to insights gained on Open Studies course and reinforced through membership of the self-help group. This, she said, had made her realise she was a 'people' person, rather than an ambitious career woman hecticly 'chasing figures' and meeting deadlines, which is what her previous job demanded.

Lena (31) *Assistant surveyor*.

Open Studies psychology an important element in Lena's desire to learn and understand people. Had opened up a new network of friends through the course and subsequent formation of self-help group, which had now become an important focus in her life. The Open Studies psychology course had given her 'valuable' new insights.

Ken (62) *Retired engineer*.

A self-confessed 'lifelong learner', enjoyed the stimulating company of younger people and regarded the psychology course as continuing to widen his horizons. Enjoyed his role as the one and only male on the self-help group, Relished debate and enjoyed beong able to put a different point of view from both the perspective of age and gender. For Ken, learning was a 'part of life'.

Diane (27) *Market Researcher*.

Open Studies had stimulated her interest in people. The self-help group had now become an integral part of her life. Enjoyed hearing older people's views.

Kath (54) *Counter cleark*.

As with the other students, the self-help group had become part of Kath's life. Over the two-year period, Kath had gained in confidence to the extent that she wished to be interviewed for the research.

Non-certificated (various):

Rosie (46) *Bank officer*.

Course provided her with insight into people's behaviour and has been of use in day-to-day life. Rosie interested in 'what makes people tick'. Prompted her to buy books and study further in her own time.

Liz (40) *Housewife (degree in biology)*

Psychology course was taken out of interest to learn about people with no expectations of 'becoming a better person'. After the course, met up with other students for a while. But did not take further courses after that. Liz feels she has not yet fulfilled her potential.

Laura (62) *Clerk*.

Continued to take an interest in arts-related subjects, but had no plans for any prolonged study, such as a degree. Enjoyed learning about people 'out of interest'.

Penny (18) *Student*.

Was not re-interviewed (unable to make contact). At first interview was interested in pursuing psychology further and possibly taking a degree. Unsure of exactly what she wanted to do in the future.

Len (34) *Self-employed hotelier*.

Had taken other courses since the Open Studies psychology, and felt he was becoming more reflective over time. Suggested that Open Studies may have played some part in this, but did not think it was particularly significant.

The above descriptions are 'thumb-nail' sketches conveying a broad impression of the students and the impact of their respective courses. But the different methodological approaches brought different levels of success, and the impact of the courses was felt in different ways.

Most successful was the interview. All students agreed to be interviewed twice. This was not possible in two cases on the certificated courses. One woman on the Women's Studies course had left with her husband to travel. This was actually a realisation of an aim expressed at interview 1. A Labour Studies student, who had not completed the course, also moved from the area. A partial update on his progress was possible through written correspondence, although contact was lost with this student before the end of the study. Attempts to contact a student on the original psychology course were unsuccessful. Of the second interviews conducted - that is, with almost all of the students originally interviewed - two were by telephone, when shorthand notes were taken.

The diary was the least successful instrument. The intention was that students would keep a record of time spent on studies - assignments, writing, reading - and response to them. As each course finished, they were to return the sheets, and a fresh batch would be posted to them. While students originally agreed to keep the diary, most came to feel that it was time-consuming and they were unable to continue. One student felt it was difficult to relate the activity to her studies.

> It's just doing something extra on top of everything else.

Another wrote:

> I would like to have filled more in, but didn't have the time.

Yet another reported that she had mislaid her completed forms. Although some sheets were returned initially, ensuring a steady rate of return proved impossible. Only three students returned any diary sheets. These students were unable to sustain the exercise. Since the key approach was the interview, and issues raised in the diary could be

addressed in the interviews, the diary method was abandoned. This is not to suggest, however, that the lack of response - and the reason for this - was without value. All the participating students wished to continue to be involved in the research and were highly co-operative. That so many felt unable to complete the diary component seemed to reflect a combination of factors, including the scope of the methodology itself (the students had already agreed to complete a 'life diagram' activity and participate in an interview), the perception of 'extra workload' by students (the diary took time and effort) and the relevance of the exercise.

The interviews were extended sessions lasting a minimum of one and a half hours. However, they were a clearly defined block of time that students were able to set aside. Furthermore, they were arranged at the convenience of the students; time and place were chosen by them. The diary was simplified as a result of piloting with a group of post-graduate research students. But while taking only minutes to fill in at any one time, completing the diary was nevertheless a continuous process requiring students to remember to make an entry each week and post the diaries back upon completion - all requiring extra effort in addition to the studies and other activities that the students may have been involved in. It appears, too, that the diary activity held little relevance for the students. Their priority was to complete the courses they were taking, not to look back on how much work they had done for it; there was little to be gained by keeping a diary largely for somebody else's benefit. Unlike the interview, which provided data for the researcher, but also an opportunity for students to talk about what they were doing in a direct, immediate and, it appears, satisfying way, the students were literally parted with the results of their efforts, which were posted off. In the jargon of social exchange theory (See Walster *et al*, 1978), the returns on the

emotional investment in the interview seem to have been high; whereas in the diary activity, they were extremely low. Others have drawn attention to the difficulties of securing support for the diary method (Moser and Kalton, 1978; Burgess, 1985) and some of the methodological pitfalls (Hughes, 1993).

The third method - the life diagram - was successful, but not entirely as anticipated. The assumption was that because the diagram was open enough to allow a flexible interpretation by the students and did not depend entirely on words, it would be relatively straightforward to administer, provide a new form of expression for the students (they were at liberty to respond in any way they wished) and stimulus material for the first interview. All interviewees on the certificated courses completed a diagram. Biographical information was thus rendered in a visual form, providing a convenient reference document, and 'triangulation instrument' which could be used as support material in conjunction with data from the interviews.

Assumptions about administration of the diagram and providing a new form of expression for students proved well founded. The diagram exercise won the support of tutors, was easy to administer and yielded useful information. The course of students' lives and events in it were depicted in a way that, because of its visual nature, provided a quick reference that was not dependent upon a great deal of text, although students did also supply written comments with the diagram What was unexpected was the level of emotional involvement by the students, and how apparently powerful the exercise would be. In one session with a psychology group of about 25 students, two refused to participate. One said it made her 'uncomfortable' while another added he felt it was 'too personal'. Another woman, in her 60s, drew her diagram in the style of a pie chart - she described it as a 'clock' - indicating 'time left to live' as well details about

her life up to that point. She said she had not considered her life in this way before, and it had provided her with a fresh way of organising the information. This student compared life as a child with that as an adult. The outbreak of war, when she was 10 years old, was a traumatic period for her. She listed some of what she described as the 'nightmares' of that time:

> Separation of parents ... mother ill ... bombs ... fear ...
> change of religion ... terror of nuns ... world will end by fire.

In contrast, her life between 45 and 60, following parenthood, was one of enjoyment and 'work of choice.'

> There was a great pleasure in things not previously available.

She felt that learning was 'still exciting' and she would continue to seek new knowledge and understanding for as long as she was able. A student on the counselling course, who recalled being a 'small and suppressed' eight-to-14 year old living in the shadow of the nuns who educated her, now in her 40s, felt a 'higher consciousness' and the need to help others. On her diagram she depicted this with heart images. Another on the same course showed her life as a continuous line distorted by peaks and troughs, illustrating illness and depression with a wavy line. Now, also in her 40s, she is reaching a new awareness of life.

> After the last change (job change and bereavement) I have realised the need for sharing and therefore now can come to terms with feelings earlier in life and 'lay ghosts to rest.' I'm now more able to be positive about the future.

The diagram activity was also run with a further group of students as part of a night class. While they were happy to undertake the activity, they did not wish to submit their work. Once again, it was because of the 'personal' nature of the diagrams.

> I don't want to hand it in because this is how I see my life. I've just drawn it like this because this is how I feel. If I hand it over, it seems I'm letting someone else see my life. (Female, 30s).

This woman had depicted her life as a series of clouds in the form of a flow-chart. Some were clouds within clouds. She described how they represented varying degrees of friendship, closeness to her relations and security. Sometimes she felt secure and protected, other times she felt more vulnerable. The clouds were in one sense barriers, yet also 'warm and soft', inviting relationships and connection with others. They also represented stages along the woman's life course.

The point to be taken from all this is that the diagram activity aroused stronger feelings and identifications than expected. It appeared to release emotions and experiences in a direct way. In a pilot session with the psychology group and later with the final version with the night class students, the activity prompted much discussion. Its use for this study was restricted to providing a 'checklist', a source of additional information, clues to people's sense of themselves and a stimulus for discussion, helping to verify statements in interviews. Information contained in the diagrams complemented that given in the interview. But it seems the instrument is of potentially wider use.

A similar life-line activity, requiring respondents to depict their lives in graphic form, has been conducted with other groups of adults (Stevens, 1983; 54; Schuller, 1989) with stimulating and informative results. In connection with this research, there

was also speculation about presentation of the diagrams (Schuller, 1990). Drawing on cultural stereotypes, it was informally hypothesized that 'technical' and 'logically-minded' men would draw their diagrams in a linear form - as straight lines or graphs - while 'nurturant' women would tend to depict their lives in a more rounded, circular form. An initial activity seemed to confirm this: a man depicted his life in a precisely linear form, with events marked at points along that line, while a woman showed her life in a spiral form, indicating 'roundness.'

> My life doesn't go in a straight line. There are loads of things happening at once. It's like a spiral, with all sorts of things flowing around. There's my family, my interests, all sorts of things ...

But this result was soon confounded as other students contradicted the hypothesis. Two women market researchers, for example, independently produced graphs, with their lives shown as a rising and falling curve between the x and y axes ('happiness' and 'time' respectively). Furthermore, some diagrams were not in the form of a straight line or circle at all, but were rectangular, showing compartments for events in the person's life, or as mentioned above, in the form of a flow chart made up of 'clouds.' There was a tendency, however, for women to use more 'rounded' symbols - clouds, hearts, circles, a 'pool' at the centre of a spider chart - whereas the men tended to use straight lines or written statements in a formal 'linear' sequence.

Given the imbalance in numbers between men and women, and the fact that the predicted style of diagram was merely speculation, no serious conclusions can be drawn from the exercise in relation to gender differences. Some time has been devoted to discussing the diagram activity, however, for the instrument itself would seem to suggest possibilities as a projective technique for exploring 'the problem of how we can

reveal the way an individual personality organizes experience in order to disclose or at least gain insight into the individual's *private world* of meanings, significances, patterns and feelings' (Frank, 1939; author's emphasis). The response by students would indicate that a more refined instrument could provide a powerful method for investigating personal experience.

The interviews were regarded as 'snapshots', with the transcriptions representing a 'textual picture' of the students at a particular moment. By comparing the two snapshots, evidence of change - and the impact of the course - could be sought. But while a snapshot takes only a moment of a person's life, it nevertheless yields rich and complex information, and can serve an analytic purpose, rather than a purely illustrative one (Ball and Smith, 1992), revealing, in this case, not simply the person at the time of the interview, but extending to that person's past, present and future, his or her feelings, hopes, ambitions and failures. The picture captures a moment a time, but is part of an ongoing process; the flow of life.

The next section begins to relate the 'picture' of students embarking on a course of study to the wider flow of their lives, and uses the familiar analogy of a journey - taking its cue from the quotation by a student describing her studies as a 'voyage of discovery' - to give shape to the findings. Apart from helping to order the material, this partly reflects the sentiment expressed by the students themselves, and so remains faithful to the experience of those undertaking Open Studies. In this way, form and content become inextricably bound, and the discussion itself forms a 'narrative' of student experience.

CHAPTER 4

8. Discussion: On the road to learning

The material in this section begins with a depiction of the students on their course as reflected through their comments. It will be presented under the following headings:

Interview 1: Starting Out - Expectations and Discovery.

This depicts the thoughts and feelings, aims and objectives of students at the beginning of their studies. The idea is to present a selection of reasons why students choose to attend a course, how they prepare for it and what they hope to achieve. The purpose is not simply to compile a checklist of why individuals embark upon certain courses: the reasons are numerous - there will be as many as there are students (Rogers, 1977; Korving, 1988). This section is intended to establish a context for the findings of the research. It conveys both specific reasons given by individual students, and creates an overall impression of the interconnection between students' past, present and future, and the activity of participating in Open Studies. Some students know each other, because they are on the same course - otherwise, the students on different courses are strangers. They never meet. Yet each has his or her own history, hopes, fears and ambitions. Through personal 'narratives', the individual constructs his or her own 'realities', that is, patterns of meaning that make sense of the world (Stevens and Sapsford, 1984:101). Yet personal and social realities are intrinsically interwoven (ibid: 103), and the individuals themselves undergo the 'shared' experience of a two-year programme of learning through Open Studies. This section introduces some of the rich

diversity among individuals, yet also generates data against which the progress of the students can be measured: Will their ambitions be realised? Will the course be what they expect? In what ways will they have changed as a result of the course? The responses at interview 1 serve as a benchmark for comparison at interview 2.

On course: travelling the educational highway.

This reveals student experience over the research period. The material does not simply state students' reactions to the course. It is organised around the components of Rossan's model of identity as a way of classifying information. The purpose is to relate the model to the experience of the students. In this way, a picture of the diversity of student experience is maintained, while continuity within the study is retained by linking the concerns of hypotheses with the model and the findings themselves. Once again, the theoretical analysis becomes not a discrete event taking place outside the 'field' (Griffin, 1987; 216), but an integral part of the process of presenting the information.

This section is more complex than the previous one, since it cuts across dimensions, and includes issues of identity as well as education. For example, the concept of cognitive complexity is explored. By its nature, such 'complexity' is something that can emerge only over a period of time, and the information is related to the individuals themselves. Using this concept to elicit how people present themselves is a fruitful way of identifying individual differences. Another of Rossan's components is that of 'setting of and reacting to personal standards.' The data generated along this dimension emerges more directly out of experience on the course, since through assignments and other coursework, in addition to the 'reflected appraisals' of others,

for example, the students themselves are able to assess results and standards they feel they are achieving. However, this can lead to frustration and anger, as well as exhilaration and satisfaction.

Interview 2: Reaching the destination - Satisfactions and Discontents.

Use of the term 'destination' is not meant to imply finality. The whole tenor of this thesis is that adults have the potential to continue learning throughout life, a sentiment supported by the students themselves, not through any desire to satisfy researcher expectations, but through actual practice: some of those interviewed are in their 50s and 60s. Rather, the 'destination' is intended to reflect the end of that particular course of study. The certificated courses are two-year programmes of work, the students often have completion of the course as a goal (ie, there is a definable block of time) and students are presented with a certificate upon successful completion; thus, there is physical and ritual acknowledgment of the end of that particular phase. The heading is intended to denote this, without implying an 'end point' to learning. In this section are presented student responses to the course, conveying what they regard as their achievements, as well an indicating any negative feelings or criticisms. The results will now be discussed, starting with the impression gained at Interview 1.

Interview 1: Starting Out - Expectations and Discovery.

At the first interview, an overall impression was obtained of students embarking upon a new course. They were in the early stages of the study, and so there was opportunity to ask about their expectations of the course, as well as deriving a sense of current identity. This 'current identity' was constructed as a result of the whole interview, but

was initiated by the opening question which asked respondents to describe themselves. Some had joined the course in direct relation to their current employment, or with a view to future career prospects. Of the four Labour Studies students interviewed, for example, two held union office, and one was both interested in politics and intended becoming more involved in union business. Another possible candidate who was asked, but did not consent to be interviewed, was also a union official. On the Women's Studies, one student felt the course would benefit her career, one saw it as a way of access to a degree course, another hoped it would contribute towards her ambition to write, while the fourth was unsure about what direction she was moving in at that stage, although she had also considered taking a degree. Students on the Counselling course, too, were looking to apply what they learned in a practical way. While not wishing to change their occupations, they were hoping to make use of their counselling skills.

The self-help Psychology group and students taking various courses emphasized 'personal development' - in terms of gaining insight into themselves and others - and enjoyment, rather than enhancing career prospects, although three suggested they would find an understanding of psychology helpful in the workplace. For all students there was an element of personal development. With the Labour Studies students, this seemed to be more directly in terms of current employment. With the Women's Studies and Counselling students, this was in broader terms of future goals and a wider set of relationships.

Here, a Labour Studies student outlines his reasons for joining the course:

> I've been getting more involved in the union, both within the company and the branch. When information about the course came, it seemed very interesting in the topics it was covering. It was a topic I was interested in ... I wanted to find

> out more. (Sam).

He is confident about the course. As a trade union representative, he is not only interested in the subject matter, but has also heard that Labour Studies is not too demanding.

> It was interesting and not particularly difficult, from what I'd heard about it. I came along. So it was an evening out of the house and off the streets, as such; and one evening shouldn't be too much to give up.

Sam's reasons for attending, then, are partly professional and partly because he feels he will be able to cope with the extra demands; something that is of concern to many part-time students.

Steve, whose previous background was in engineering, is now heavily involved in union activity. In his workplace, Steve had originally been anti-union because of all the 'hassle' he had suffered in his previous job as a manager. However, after moving jobs he had gradually become more interested in union activities as a result of feeling that the officers at that time were making autocratic decisions which rank and file members found difficult to challenge. He was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with that system.

> The people who ran our branch had been around for so many years that they kind of made a decision on anything and that was it and nothing could actually shake that decision. I found I was disagreeing more and more from what they were saying. I was looking at it from a younger person's angle at that time.

He had not intended taking Labour Studies, but attended an open evening to assess the course on behalf of his union's education committee, which was considering sponsoring places on it. He registered, however, because the course looked as if it could be useful, and also he had never wanted to find himself in the same position as

the union officials whom he had questioned when he first became involved. Although he was unsure of what he hoped to gain - and admits that had he never attended the open evening, he would probably never have taken Labour Studies - he did feel that, if nothing else, it would improve his knowledge and understanding of union affairs. Steve also believes that commitment is essential. This is reflected both in his attitude towards union work (he is on some 17 committees) and the course.

> I'm not a person who does thing half-heartedly. Within two months of joining the union I was on the executive committee ... I've been branch secretary ever since. If you're going to do these things, you've got to be committed.

Steve's union - he has now been branch secretary for 15 years - sponsored him on the course.

Dave, who has studied economics and history, wants to keep abreast of union activity and improve his study skills. Although he had been in a union with his friends at college, he had not been directly involved for some time.

> I've always been interested in politics and want to actually study it. I just never had the time ... I'm interested in keeping informed, keeping up to date, just trying to improve writing reports ... and reading up on the unions as well. There's so much. But the tutor can guide the reading, that helps you to find your way around the literature ... I'm interested in trying to understand it, but it's quite complicated.

His interest in unions has developed over the years. In studying politics and history the unions had 'cropped up.' Dave, who currently works at a fitness centre, is also considering a career change, which the course may indirectly contribute to.

> There's also a vocational element. If there's a chance of a training officer of a trade union it's helpful to have done a course on trade unions. That's not a primary aim, but that is a consideration ... I think it will help me to reassess some of my views ...

Debbie, 34, who describes herself as a 'self-determined career woman' and breadwinner hopes Women Studies will increase her understanding of interpersonal relations and contribute to her career prospects. She works in personnel.

> To get any further with career, I'm now at the stage where I need to do a degree, an MBA (Master of Business Administration). I want to achieve more.

After considering possible part-time degree courses (which she felt were more suited to 'woman-at-home, bored, and doesn't really want to do anything, but goes and does it for interest ... not very career based and so on'). Debbie chose Women's Studies because she felt it would be of most benefit at both a personal a career level.

> It was a case of which one may include something that interests me and which one relates to job and Women's Studies was just that, something that would interest me and may relate to job in that it includes a little bit of industrial discrimination, sex discrimination.

Others were more 'exploratory', and wanted to 'make discoveries', as one student described it. Lena, who was attending an Open Studies psychology course, and was also one of the self-help group members, approached the course in a particular way. She deliberately did not consult course books before hand, in order to avoid any preconceptions she might acquire. While she acknowledged the value of reading the books - and eventually did so - she also wished to respond directly to the experience in the classroom, leaving her response 'completely open':

> I'm enjoying the course, as far as I'm concerned that's my progress on it. That's my enjoyment. I haven't actually studied any of the books which have been mentioned ... but I don't want to look at any books until the end of the course to see how I feel about it. Sometimes the knowledge you get from books and the course, sort of, mingle into one and you don't know whether it's the book you enjoyed or the course you enjoyed. As it's something new, I just want to go through it and see how I feel about it.

Between the two 'orientations' of clearly structured, work-related reasons for attending a course and a completely open-minded approach, there was a range of perspectives, but these fell broadly into two categories: those wishing to directly apply what they learned, in a more or less 'instrumental' sense, and those seeking personal development, but with less clear plans about how to use their new knowledge and experience. This is not to imply there were no long-term goals, but rather, that there was a broader view of possibilities. The Counselling students combined a motivation for personal development with ideas of possibly putting what they learned into practice. It seemed that, because of the nature of Counselling, the students were drawn to issues of personal development and care, yet also adopted a pragmatic approach; all five students interviewed hoped to either apply their new skills, and possibly derive income from them, or use the certificate towards a degree. For Sally, the course was part of a longer-term strategy.

> It's part of a campaign for me to do my own thing. OK. If I had no constraints with family I would probably drop employment and go and do full-time education. But that's not a realistic option. It's not something that's really open to me. So I still feel there are other ways of achieving my goals. ..There are two main goals. One is a management course. That may well be at diploma level. And then at least a degree in health studies. So I'd like at least to be at degree level.

As part of this longer-term campaign, Sally's counselling course is related to wider issues in her life:

> I was putting together a CV, and apart from my professional qualifications, I've spent study days on multi-cultural education and counselling. It was not a conscious decision this year, but I went out and chose to expand those interests. I've followed courses in both of those topics. I think counselling ... will enrich me as a person It's something I can apply in my relationship with my husband, my children, my friends. It's also professional enrichment as well.

This enrichment further related to Sally's view of her role not just as a health professional, but also mother and spouse.

> I regard myself first as a mother and a partner. Those are my two most precious things. As a professional person and a student, I feel I'm a bit of everything.

She felt that as she got older, she was becoming more confident and sure of her own abilities.

> I feel now there's a drive within me to reach my own potential. And I see this pattern, which has developed over the last few years of doing courses, continuing for some years.

Ellie, Teresa and Lynda all intended to practise counselling:

> I would like to try and achieve as professional a situation as I can with the counselling that I'm doing. (Teresa)

> I'm interested in people. I like to know what makes them tick. I like alternative things, like alternative medicines. I'd like to do counselling, maybe combine it with acupuncture. But I have the feeling that I should get a qualification that's not quite so 'alternative'. Also, I do a lot of counselling, and I'd like to learn to do it properly. (Lynda)

> Well, it's not entirely clear ... I enjoy learning. I like people and dealing with people. I would like to use my counselling. But I've got to think a bit more about exactly how to do this. ... it'll need some more thought ... (Ellie).

At this stage plans are not fixed. There is a sense of purpose and direction, but the precise route to achieving the goal remains flexible. In a Piagetian sense, the students are manipulating abstract ideas, and hypothesizing about the future. (Horrocks and Jackson, 1972). There are numerous alternatives within a broad framework of possibilities. A shared theme is an interest in and concern for people. Teresa does not underestimate the difficulties, but remains optimistic:

> I know (this) will take a long time because a lot of counselling experience is required ... which is what I'm lacking ... But I'm always aware of open doors or watching out for them.

Lynda is eager to pursue her study, even though she is unsure of the actual value of the certificate:

> This is quite important to me. I want that qualification, but I don't know how useful it's actually going to be. I mean, are these certificates useful?'

There is awareness, then, of the longer-term nature of the enterprise and the possibility of moving on to a part-time degree. But the women also relate the course to their personal lives, are aiming to reach a high standard, and are determined to complete the course, even though the currency of the certificate itself may not be clear.

Women's Studies students are also interested in issues of care and personal development, but the options are more varied, from simply discovering whether it is possible to complete a period of sustained study, to using the Women's Studies certificate to gain access to a degree course which would help in career progression.

> I hope to increase my knowledge of women's issues and get a decent mark, so that I can actually do a degree (in health care). I'm confident I'm going to get it ... Yes. Perhaps get more involved in research. Do a degree. Perhaps even social research. There's all sorts of things dormant which I'm doing. With a little bit of guidance and more knowledge, things will become clearer. (Hilary).

Hilary was in the early stages of the course and although she was enjoying it, had not known what to expect.

> I suppose I perceived it as something to do with Women's Studies. But not having anything to do with Women's Studies previously, I found it hard to visualize exactly what was entailed

Karen, a head teacher, hopes to gain greater insight into women's issues. She is attending for pleasure, but also plans to do some writing, and feels the course will provide her with background knowledge. She feels, too, that despite her professional position, she is not as forceful in her views as other women appear to be.

> I've been in teaching, where I don't think there's been the competition that there might have been in something like merchant banking, or any other male-dominated profession where it might have been different.

Another student, Beth felt she had little academic 'back up' and had decided to use the first year of the course to see if she was able to cope with sustained study.

> I'm not exactly sure how it will go. I want to do it and feel I will benefit from it, but I'm not sure how at this stage. I'll see how it works out.

Although she had gained professional qualifications as a secretary, it had been nearly 10 years since she had completed any formal education or training. Her decision to return to studying was stimulated partly by her husband and brother, who both had degrees, issuing a challenge.

> They just ganged up one day ... they were throwing down the gauntlet ...and when I analysed it, I mean I run around after my husband and kept home, I run around after my little boy and I run around after two men at work. And I decided I was spending my life running around after men ... my husband had just got his degree. He'd studied for it part time.

After enrolling for GCSE maths and sociology courses and realising she could cope with it, she decided to attempt an Open Studies course. The Women's Studies course appealed to her, and it was also suggested by a Woman's Studies tutor that, because she had little academic 'back up' she could use the first year to see whether she could cope with more sustained study.

A different impression was gained of the 'self-help' Psychology students. These appeared to be on what one described as a 'voyage of discovery'. The setting up of the group had been inspired by Open Studies, and while the students had not discounted the possibility of following a certificated course (such a course in psychology did not exist at the time) they were following their own interests. It was this group that produced, perhaps, the most dramatic transformation of any single individual in terms of lifestyle and attitude (from market researcher to aromatherapist).

Unlike students on the certificated courses, who were aware from the outset that they were undertaking a two-year study overall, the psychology students simply knew that, despite differences in age and experience, they related well to each other and were intent on pursuing the interest in psychology that had been stimulated by Open Studies. They did not know, in the early stages, how this would develop. Lena had started the psychology 'as a fun thing.'

> ... but I'm really taking an interest now. I hope to at least know something. At the moment I feel as if I've at least touched something, but there's nothing behind it. It's sort of like when you touch something, but it's not really there. You know what it feels like, but you can't really get at it. It's perhaps like looking at something through a glass. You can see it but you can't touch it.

She felt she was on a 'voyage' of 'pure discovery':

> Everything that comes to me is new and that's the way I like it. I like the element of surprise. It's one of the excitements of it. I like the idea of not being organised or not knowing exactly what's going to happen. It adds to the fun ... I suppose it's normal for people to be organised and simply want to 'gain knowledge.' But they seem to think that there is a reason behind whatever is done, when the reason is perhaps that you should find out about yourself. I personally don't feel uncomfortable. I enjoy the actual factual learning as well as the experiment.
>
> I don't have a clear view of what we will be doing in it or what it will be about or whatever. It's completely open. It's like a voyage ... of discovery. I like that. I like being surprised ... of not exactly knowing what's coming next ...

Yet although the self-help psychology students were uncertain as to how their group would develop, or whether it would even manage to sustain itself, they nevertheless shared a common interest and a sense of direction. They wished to continue studying psychology, they had discussed some of the issues and learned techniques for studying from the Open Studies psychology course and had enthusiasm for a longer-term venture. They were intending that the group would run for as long as it was successful and they felt benefit from it.

Students who had pursued a selection of non-certificated Open Studies courses over the same period, presented a more varied picture. They exhibited individual interests, but did not share a sense of common purpose in the way the self-help psychology group did. At interview 1, these students - on a psychology course at the time - could not say precisely what they would be doing next, and indicated a range of possible courses. However, those interviewed did suggest they would continue to take courses. An impression was gained that the activity of Open Studies - or other courses - was almost a taken-for-granted part of their lives; that they would continue to pursue their interests, although not all were able to specify at that point exactly what these might be. These students spoke about why they joined, their expectations and how they were getting on.

> I love it. I've always been interested in it (psychology). I think possibly, when, probably, from when my daughter was born, when she was a baby. I bought a copy of Dr Spock's book, which I thought was wonderful, I really liked it ... I think it probably started then, because I found that quite interesting and I suppose it's gone on form there, really. But I'd never ever seen a night school course before. This was the first one I'd seen. Otherwise I'd have done one before ... I didn't have any (expectations). I just went along, you know, to see what it was like ... I'd like to gain insight really into the way people are. People are very interesting ... and *why* people behave the way they do. (Rosie).

Rosie, who had followed a secretarial career before taking professional qualifications and now worked for a merchant bank, had studied French, yoga and crochet ('you can't really call those courses, can you? ... I was sort of shamed into that (crochet). When my daughter was born people made me beautiful things and I couldn't do anything like that. Totally useless with the fingers. I thought I ought to perhaps do it.'). She took the courses 'purely because I enjoyed doing them'.

Meanwhile Liz, who had graduated in biology and holds an MPhil, continued to be interested in people's behaviour, but had no 'grand plan' about bettering herself.

> I felt it would be nice to know more. I was doing it purely as an interest basis. I don't want to go on to do anything else. It's to sort of learn more about human relationships. I don't want to gain anything from it. I haven't got any great expectations of being a better person or knowing myself at all.

Rosie and Liz were taking the psychology course 'out of interest', in both cases as part of a curiosity about people - how they behave and what 'makes them tick'. Len was also taking the course out of interest, but expressed a broader personal agenda. He felt he was changing as a person and at that point was facing a dilemma over the relative importance of the spiritual and material aspects of his life. He wanted to find out not just more about other people, but also about himself.

> I want to be on my own terms, really, and not those of somebody else. At the moment I'm also torn between what I really want out of life, whether it be material things or, when I say spiritual things I don't mean religious or anything like that, although that may come into it, or being purely for money or other things. I'm not convinced now that money is really the best, or ultimate aim, which at one stage I thought it was.

But he was finding parts of the course difficult, and was concerned about the effect the insights gained from the course might have. Would he ever be 'off duty?'

> It's ... a bit hard going. Freud I find it a bit hard at times. Lots of things to remember. Unusual names or labels put on to things. And also one concern is whether, after we've done it, one's ever off duty. Whether you start reading people's body language and why are they doing that? Why are they saying that? Is that what they really meant? And that kind of thing. Or whether it's really a good thing ... It's very interesting to know how or why people react in certain ways. Freud's theories, I would imagine, are not always 100-per-cent true ... I must admit I didn't think we'd get so involved with the likes of Freud. I must say, I find it quite heavy going

Len felt strongly that his life was in the process of changing, and this was reflected to some extent in the ambivalence towards the material he was being confronted with (ie, wanting gain insight into himself, but finding the course 'heavy going'; wondering whether he would ever be psychologically 'off duty,' yet at the same time feeling that this might be a 'good thing' in terms of understanding people). Yet this, and a previous Open Studies course he had undertaken, was providing him with a new perspective on himself; despite the uncertainties, he paradoxically felt he was becoming more of his 'own person', that he was assuming more responsibility for his own actions:

> ... anything that I do and anything that's happened is, by and large, up to me. Of my own making. Rather than saying either I can't do something, or somebody else made me, it's actually me who's instigated it ... I think the fact that we're responsible, master of our own destiny ... Obviously other people can influence it, but whatever one does it's of your own doing, which is something I hadn't really considered before. But now it's sunk in, it becomes more and more obvious, the way, day by day, everything I see and hear really does clarify it even more.

Although all students were undertaking Open Studies courses, then, there were different motivations and agendas between individuals and groups. An overall impression was that they were determined to learn. Despite the differences between individuals, the picture presented was of adults preparing to voluntarily submit themselves to a planned course of study, for whatever reason. Whether or not there was a definite goal did not affect their intention to pursue that course of action. For

one or two, the intrinsic reward of simply taking the course seemed to be sufficient. For others, course interest and personal development coupled with an 'instrumental' goal of career enhancement or change, or further academic study, possibly at degree level, seemed to provide a motivating factor. Expectations were that some kind of change would occur.

The examples so far relate directly to students' views of the courses they were embarking upon, and some of the reasons for that. But to elicit a notion of individuals' current identities, a broader picture was obtained (through the interview), which integrated past experience as well as future plans. The following section presents responses to questions constructed around Rossan's categories for the structure of identity, and constructs a more complex picture of student experience. The headings are used as a guide, although there was often overlap between categories; student answers could satisfy several categories, rather than neatly fitting any one, as would happen in a tightly structured questionnaire for statistical analysis. Moving on from the expectations of the students, the next section depicts the results in terms of the experience of the individuals actually during the course, as they travel the 'educational pathway.'

On course: travelling the educational highway.

This section groups responses into categories suggested by Rossan's (1987) sources of identity. These are: cognitive complexity, social comparison, reflected appraisals, setting of and reacting to personal standards, interpretations of bodily change, outcome of role negotiations and current identity. The categories help to construct an overall

picture of individual identities - literally representing 'different voices' - yet also the way in which these individuals relate to the courses.

Cognitive Complexity:

Cognitive complexity refers to the way in which people think of themselves in different ways. As Rossan comments, they may be able to tolerate more or less ambiguity in their lives. Cognitive complexity can be revealed through use of language. Different impressions of people are obtained from what they say. Language plays an important part in helping the individual to define both him or her self and his or her relationship with others (Plunkett, 1984; Graddol, 1984; Coates, 1993; Coates and Cameron, 1991). Symbolic interaction theory, for example, maintains that the self develops as individuals acquire language and learn to apply that language to themselves. The content of self-conceptions is 'circumscribed and organized by the symbols available in a person's language community' (Stryker, 1981).

For this study, strong impressions were gained of individuals, not simply through the content of what they said, but also in the way they said it. One impression of the different ways in which individuals presented themselves, was gained from replies to the first question, which asked students for a self description. They were asked to 'tell (the researcher) about yourself.' Replies before further prompting ranged from one minute (woman, 18) to half an hour (man, 62). Most responses were about 2.5 minutes. The following quotation is from a young woman on an Open Studies psychology course who participated in the pilot interview. Although she was not on a certificated course at the time, her comments are nevertheless the expression of a

young person's experience, and have been retained to illustrate the wide range of differences between individuals in terms of cognitive complexity:

> Well, I'm 18. I'm at school. I live in Leamington and have done all my life. And I can't think of anything else to say. I don't know. Um. (Pause). I went to school until I was, um, 16 and then and then I left and went to Binswood. Then I left there in January and, um, worked for a bit. Then I went back. And I'm doing my A-levels now and then I'm going to do a degree in English and psychology. Um ...

In contrast, the next quotation represents the first 75 seconds of the 62-year-old man's response. He was on the same psychology course as the young woman, and was the instigator of the self-help psychology group, whose members were interviewed as part of this study.

> As an individual? Er, well, I suppose really, you've got to say, fundamentally, just an ordinary human being trying to work, er, our way through life in the best way we, one, can. I think that's basically it. And your life develops along paths which are, in a way, related very much circumstances you're born into. To a large extent it's a matter of luck: who you're born, when you're born and the circumstances you're brought up in and who you come in contact with. And who you find influences you and your development as an individual. Fundamentally, that's how it is. I think mainly, without being boring or egotistical about it - it's not often you the opportunity to talk about yourself (laughs) - so it's quite nice to have an undivided audience. Now looking back, if you want to, from where I am at the moment to the beginning of my life, er, the main development of my life is that it has been towards the natural things that you tend towards really because the atmosphere I was brought up in was a pretty liberal atmosphere ...

In roughly the same amount of time, there were fewer pauses, a wider range of references, possibly reflecting a broader experience and knowledge, and a more complex view of life. The young student's answer was focused on school, brief work experience and where she lived and was more sequential and episodic in form (ie one event followed the next: school *then* work *then* back to school). The older man's reply functions at different levels. In the first sentence he clarifies, through a rhetorical query, that he is talking about himself as an 'individual' but soon generalises to 'we' and

'you' to make a general 'fundamental' statement about how people work their way through life in the best way they can. He quickly refers to circumstances people are born into and the influences to which they are subjected. Having established a general context, he then brings his reply back round to personal experience, and proceeds to talk about his own, idiosyncratic upbringing. He has a longer-term perspective, and is able to state explicitly that he will be looking back from his current situation. The younger student also looks back ('I live in Leamington and have done all my life') but the span in number of years is inevitably less.

No value judgements are here being made about intelligence, or the ability to articulate individual experience. Indeed, at the time of the interview, the young woman was aiming to go to university, possibly taking a certificated Open Studies course along the way, and was able to clearly discuss her experiences to date. The man's ability to give a fuller and significantly more extended answer could be down to a number of factors including age, the nature of his work (he had been an engineer), his interests (including psychology), his upbringing (his mother had run a guest house in which a number of actors had lodged) and his wider experience and level of confidence. Other students independently testified that he was a 'talker' and enjoyed debate. The young woman was still at school, and had not yet been exposed to the same range of influences. Additionally, nervousness and perceived purpose of the interview may have played a part. The 62-year-old man relished the opportunity to talk about his life to an 'undivided audience' and through his understanding of psychology was able to appreciate the researcher's need to obtain an interview. The 18-year-old woman, however, was unsure of what was wanted in the interview and at the end of it remarked: 'I don't know what you were after. The questions just seemed to come out

of the blue. But I hope you got what you wanted.' In other words, the older student was able to enter into the interview process in a more relaxed and participatory way, exercising a degree of control over the situation. Despite the differences, however, both were able to articulate their experiences, as were all the subjects interviewed. This is significant, in that they present themselves as competent and rational individuals.

The model of identity underpinning the study, and the very act of participation in Open Studies, assumes a level of cognitive and social ability that would not necessarily be appropriate if the subjects were, say, patients in a mental institution. Goffman (1975), for instance, discusses the destructive effect on identity of people in 'total institutions' such as mental hospitals and prisons.

The two examples given above represent extremes along a continuum, from an elderly and experienced talkative male to a young, relatively inexperienced and quieter female, and their response to the first question. The replies of other students fell between these two extremes. Yet the answers were still highly individual. Some students spoke slowly, taking time to reflect upon their answers, others spoke more quickly. Some responded without hesitation, others found the task difficult, not because they were unable to answer, but because of the range of possible answers.

> Where do you want me to start?

and:

> Oh, gosh, that's a big question.

Speech styles varied from coherent, structurally complete sentences without interruption, to breaking off in mid-sentence, perhaps to attend to another thought that

had occurred. Some used elaborate phrases with numerous sub-clauses; one student used a clipped style, with fewer prepositions. Within minutes of the interview, an impression of people as distinct individuals with their own personality and nature began to emerge. This point may not be as obvious as it seems. There is debate over whether identity can be conceived of as a 'distinct entity' with the individual being clearly 'bounded' or as something more changing and multi-faceted; that, in fact, identity is not a 'unified whole'.

From the responses, there is the impression created of distinct and bounded individuals, with relatively consistent likes and dislikes, habits, lifestyles and opinions. Yet the picture is not quite as simple as this might imply, for those individuals also exhibit, even if they are unable to explicitly acknowledge, contradictions and paradoxes within themselves, and despite a trait-type perception of individual identity (Marshall and Wetherell, 1989), which assumes a fixed and stable personality, nevertheless often report a multi-dimensional model of themselves. In some cases they are able to perceive of themselves as changed and changing individuals.

> I got to the stage where I didn't really know what I was doing except the usual cycle of getting up, going to work, coming home, going to bed kind of thing. I thought it was becoming a real drudgery. I saw an article in the paper for a course. It was that course that got me going. It didn't come in a blinding flash, or anything like that, but it just triggered something. There didn't seem to be any sense, day after day. It was the proverbial 'What's the meaning of life. What's it all about? (Len)

The cognitive complexity of individuals did not simply manifest itself immediately as a result of the first question, however, but emerged gradually over the course of the interview as deeper meanings and more complex themes and associations unfolded. Here a midwife is recalling working abroad; a chain of associations is set in motion

which revives painful memories of the woman's brother who had been killed in a car crash several years before. A substantial section of the interview is presented, followed by analysis:

> I feel I'm a sociable person, fairly outgoing, fairly catholic interests. I like travel. I like to be amused. I suppose I've been able to achieve a fair amount of things. I've arranged things or looked for amusement. And in my life, I suppose. Yes. I've had a relatively easy life, really, I would say. I enjoyed my 10 years in Brussels. Yes. That, sort of, stands out. Because that's the most recent, as well. I liked the contact with the cosmopolitan atmosphere and the feeling of being a foreigner in a foreign country and being accepted for one's person, for oneself. Because in Ireland I found it a very class-oriented society, like in the UK, I think, probably. I find it very divisive. Man's inhumanities to man always struck me as being unfair. I liked the uniqueness of living in a foreign country. I suppose one had this feeling of being on holiday, in a way. One always had something to do at the weekend, and if one didn't have anything to do, you had to plan to do something ... Perhaps because I was living on my own. Although I did co-habit with a Danish guy and we used to go to Denmark quite often. That was an experience ... and I spent Christmas up there and danced around the Christmas tree. Sing carols and light real candles on the Christmas tree. That was an unusual experience. He lived in the country. So I experienced country life in Denmark. I travelled widely on the continent ... I went to Romania once in 1974. That was an experience. My first experience of an Eastern European country. And I was continually being harassed for my clothes. People wanted to buy my `clothes. I gave them away. They were so poor. So incredibly different from what I had expected it to be. I knew it would be different. But it was so deprived. So poor. Terrible. Let's see. I suppose I've had down times in life, too, like everyone else, you know. It hasn't always been a ... I suppose after my Danish boyfriend and I broke up I was pretty, upset over that ... and um ... you get over things. One learns from these experiences. Funnily enough, I've blocked out a very significant incident. My own brother died, nine years ago, in an accident. I didn't think about that. I think one tries to forget about or blocks out unhappy memories. I think this has been proven in psychology ... no ... I was in Brussels at the time. He was married and had a 10-day-old baby daughter. And that was really ... tragic ... I sort of ... it's amazing .. I didn't think that actually, sort of, you know ... um ... I suppose perhaps because I lived for myself and everything and I was relatively spoilt as a child. I am a bit selfish, I feel. And I think my selfishness ... sometimes I get annoyed by it and I try to overcome it. So that's why I didn't think about him. Sorry. I'm going to cry ...

At this point in the interview, the tape was stopped, and was not re-started until about 20 minutes later, at the student's request. This extract is given at length because it illustrates a number of ways how Open Studies might relate to and impact upon the individual's sense of self. In terms of cognitive complexity, there are a number of

continuing and contrasting themes and images. First, there is a bright, optimistic, positive and active theme running through Hilary's account. She describes herself as 'sociable, ' and 'outgoing' with catholic interests and a sense of adventure ('I like travel.' 'I liked the uniqueness of living in a foreign country.'). She enjoys a cosmopolitan atmosphere and the sense of 'being on holiday', with always something to do, or having to plan something. She has a Danish boyfriend, who introduces her to new experiences in Denmark ('I experienced country life'). These good experiences are reinforced by festive images conjured up through descriptive phrases such as 'I spent Christmas up there and danced around the Christmas tree' and 'Sing carols and light candles on the Christmas tree. That was an unusual experience.'

This dimension is combined with a warm, compassionate and generous 'self,' revealing a concern for people and conditions (' ... a class-oriented society ... I find it very divisive,' 'Man's inhumanities to man always struck me as being unfair' and 'People wanted to buy my clothes. I gave them away.') These two aspects of Hilary's personality are themselves closely associated with her fulfilling time in Europe. (This is even further reinforced at other points in Hilary's interview, where she describes how she became a nurse partly *because* she wanted to travel, and felt nursing would enable her to do that). But they also highlight vividly contrasting (and conflicting) experiences; between, for example, the festivities at Christmas, and the witnessing of 'deprived' and 'terrible' conditions suffered by people in Romania. These are themselves conceptually linked to the relationship Hilary has with her Dutch boyfriend, for it is with him that she learns about Denmark and its customs. The contrast between the bright and comfortable times with her boyfriend and the deprivations of the Romanian

people involves awareness of others, as well as simply events happening in certain places.

The split between Hilary and her boyfriend is upsetting, and mention of it seems to prompt distressing recollections of her own brother's death. The two experiences become virtually fused: they are literally referred to in the same phrase ('I was pretty upset over that. Funnily enough, I've blocked out a very significant incident'). This is unexpected, and arouses in Hilary feelings of guilt at what she regards as 'selfishness.' The fond memories of having a 'relatively easy life' and looking for 'amusement' take on a further layer of meaning as Hilary sees herself as being 'relatively spoilt' and living only for herself.

The effect is intensified in the contrast between the descriptions of a happy life in Europe, and the fact that her brother had a 10-day-old daughter at the time of his tragic accident. Hilary's speech itself becomes more halting as she recalls the incident, progressing from a relatively uninterrupted flow, to a more broken style, with incomplete sentences and conflicting sentiments ('Funnily enough', 'I didn't think about that', 'Unhappy memories,' 'It's been proven in psychology ... no ... I was in Brussels at the time,' '...it's amazing ... I didn't think that, actually, sort of, you know ...'). Further ambivalence is introduced through Hilary's mention of being in Brussels at the time of the accident, a city she enjoyed working in for 10 years. A general unifying theme running through Hilary's statement is that of 'experience' ('an unusual experience,' 'that was an experience', 'my first experience,' 'One learns from these experiences').

A picture emerges, then, of a highly complex, sensitive individual, with conflicting thoughts and feelings, continuities and contradictions, all of which contribute to the person's overall sense of self. There is not space to analyse all the interview data in

such detail. But this section of Hilary's interview alone conveys something of the richness of that data, and the way in which analysis through the concept of cognitive complexity can facilitate a complex yet coherent representation of self. From the point of view of Open Studies, this single example reveals the dynamic functioning that can exist within individuals in any classroom situation, yet which is below the visible 'surface' of the group itself.

The remarks also provide clues to the way in which the concerns of an Open Studies course can potentially impact upon an individual's identity. Hilary sees herself as a caring person. She works in health care, and other parts of her interview reveal how she came to enter the health care service. Yet the 'caring' element of her personality is not simply related to her job. It is part of her fundamental view of her self, and this springs from a number of sources, including family background. Her love of travel, for instance, is related both to nursing (she felt that as a nurse she would be able to travel), and to her father's interest in travel books. He read a lot, but never actually succeeded in travelling. Hilary feels she is achieving what her father was never able to do. The travel, as has been demonstrated, is itself intertwined with other deep memories which are at one and the same time fulfilling yet tragic. So the caring side to Hilary has a significance wider than simply her job. This is further enhanced through her role as a midwife, which is to bring 'new life' into the world. In that role, she also tries to encourage mothers to take an interest in their own education.

Since caring is a salient feature in Hilary's self-image, relevant material on the Open Studies course will have the potential of reinforcing and developing Hilary's expertise, and so her 'identity' as a carer. To draw from cognitive psychology, she will have assimilated new knowledge - and experience - and as a result her 'caring schema'

would have been extended, enabling her to make greater differentiation, including that with regard to her perspective on herself. In this way the Open Studies potentially reinforces and develops Hilary's sense of self.

Two further brief examples, drawn from a psychology night class, will help to demonstrate the cognitive complexity or dynamic 'forces', to borrow a Freudian concept, that flow beneath the surface, as an invisible undercurrent, yet which relate to the person's view of self and how this in turn can impinge upon the 'learning environment' of the classroom. In this case, the topic was 'awareness', and students were asked to write a passage about some activity or event they had been involved in, including everything they could remember about the experience; who they were with, what it felt like, what they saw, what they did.

One woman in her 50s recalled going for a ride in the country in a convertible motor car as a child, and remembered the 'smell of the leather seats ... the feel of the wind on (her) face' and went on to describe the event in detail. Although she was afraid the rest of the group would find her example 'boring', it was a memory, she said, which had remained dormant for years. (The group did not find her recollection boring. On the contrary, one member described it as 'exquisite'; others agreed it was a touching piece of writing. All seemed to share the experience in one way or another). In the same session, another woman, also in her 50s, revealed for the first time in public, feelings about the death of her mother several years before. She had not got on particularly well with her mother, but now spoke of her continuing sense of guilt at not having reached her, and spoken to her, before she died. Once again, the group responded to this in a sensitive manner, appearing to have shared understanding of the very human predicament. These examples illustrate the cognitive complexity of

individuals and how previous experience can affect the individual's current sense of self. This 'cognitive complexity', however, is not a discrete and isolated dimension, neatly compartmentalized, to be dealt with as a separate entity on an interview schedule. It pervades the whole of an individual, and in the interviews was revealed over the hours of talking, not simply during a particular period of the meetings.

The complexity of an individual evolves and manifests itself in many different ways, and there are different dimensions along which this can be examined, each of which contributes to the whole representation. A key source of personal identity, and the way individuals think of themselves, is the way others view the individual; through reflected appraisals, the individual constructs a representation of him or herself based on the attitudes of others. Consideration of reflected appraisals now follows.

Reflected Appraisals:

Reflected appraisals are when individuals communicate attitudes to others. These attitudes are internalised, so that the individual is able to respond to him or herself as others have in the past. An example might be a child who is praised as being 'good' and internalises the attitude, so that the child sees him or herself as 'good'. Before turning to the experience of adults on Open Studies courses, a simple example is given to illustrate the principle of reflected appraisal, in this case, as verbal reward in the form of praise to a child. Use of praise as a reward is a technique used in applied psychology, often to encourage learning, especially among children. In this extract from a recorded session (Cashdan, 1978) a teacher is working with a child who has behavioural and communication problems:

Teacher: "Lee. Can you put the car on the floor. Put the car on the floor. *Good*

Teacher: "Now tell me: Where's the car?"

Lee: "On the floor."

Teacher: "*Good* Lee. *Good*. Now put it in the box."

Lee: "There's the box."

Teacher: "There's the box. That's right Lee. Put it *in* the box. Tell me, where's the car?"

Lee: "In the box."

Teacher: "Very good. Very good, Lee. Now put the car on the chair. Lee. On the chair. On your chair. Now Lee. Where is the car?

Lee: "On the chair."

Teacher: "On the chair. That's right. Very good. Good boy."

Lee is a four-and-a-half year old child who has been transferred to a special class in a normal infant school. The approach to Lee's difficulties, specifically with the communication, along with those of others in his class, is referred to as behaviour modification, in which "desirable behaviour is shaped and reinforced by consistent use of praise and rewards." (ibid. See also Richardson, 1980 and Beloff, 1975).

In the extract above, there is frequent use of the term ' good' and 'good boy' to reinforce the pupil's behaviour and build confidence. Some words have been italicised to reflect the teacher's verbal emphasis on those words. The reflected appraisal, through the positive 'reward' of praise, is encouraging and reinforcing Lee's behaviour. Such a system of praise and reward would not be so straightforward with adults in the complex setting of Open Studies courses. Nor would they be so obviously 'behavioural' in the sense of a desired response being immediately reinforced with reward. But the reflected appraisals of childhood contribute to the sense of self carried into adulthood. Karen's father, for example, had been 'very clever' but had to leave grammar school

early as his father had died. He was 'bitter about it all his life. He always resented it.' But Karen's parents had encouraged her and her sister to do what they wanted. Although bitter about missed academic opportunities, Karen's father was nevertheless supportive and 'very easy going'.

> He would never push you into anything. If you chose not to work at school that was your business. We had literally no pressures on us at all. There was no hassle about us passing the scholarship exam ... He always taught us we were as good as anybody. I think we grew up thinking we were as good as anybody.'

Here, Karen describes the style of her upbringing, and demonstrates how her father's appraisal ('we were as good as anybody') influenced her own thinking ('I grew up thinking we were as good as anybody.') Karen herself had also retained an interest in education, eventually becoming a head teacher. Lynda, too, recalls the influence of her parents:

> I'm just like ... my mother ... we're both quite opinionated. They've taught me a love of nature because they were always taking us out. Things like ornithology and wild flowers and things. I've really inherited that. They're both people who are interested in things, who want to find out things. And I suppose I'm like that as well ...

Yet although the reflected appraisals from childhood influence adult conceptions of themselves, they remain important in adulthood, too. Praise and reward for effort play a part in influencing adults' feelings about themselves, as the interviews for this study reveal; although, once again, praise and reward can be complicated matters, intimately related to students' feelings not only of high self-esteem, confidence and assertiveness, but also to vulnerability, lack of confidence and feelings of low self-worth. Some of these factors were demonstrated when students were asked how they evaluated their progress (it was assumed that this would include interaction with other students, as

well as comments, verbal or written, from tutors) how they responded to praise and how they coped with criticism, since all these include elements of appraisal from others. Although, as it shall be shown later, the adults on these courses tended to feel they were more their 'own person' and argued that they were not unduly influenced by others as, say, a child might be, they did nevertheless reveal that the views of others were important. In terms of evaluating their progress, they valued the views of their fellow students as well as those of the tutors. Grades for assignments helped, too.

> Feedback within the group situation from my peers. And also the vibes I'm getting (from the tutor). We've also done one assignment. That was OK. (Sally)
>
> I really can only evaluate that by having feedback from the people that I do talk with an obviously (the tutor) when she looks at or listens to our work.' (Teresa)
>
> I think essays, really, essay marks. (Hilary).

However, the relationship between 'reflected appraisals' and an individual's view of self is not straightforward. Just because a person is praised or criticised, for instance, does not mean that the recipient interprets the 'message' in the way it is intended. Lynda, for instance, felt she was having difficulties with the course, despite reassurances from the tutor.

> The thing is (the tutor) says you've got no problems. But I know I've got problems. Perhaps they're not obvious. Although she didn't say 'you're doing fine', I know that I'm not. I know I've got difficulties as well. I just find it hard to understand some of the academic argument. And fitting it in. I can't get the work done easily. So I know I've got problems.

Here, the 'reflected appraisal' contradicts what the student herself feels. The positive assessment from the tutor continues to have, unwittingly, a negative effect on Lynda, and her low image of herself (as being unable to cope with the course) is reinforced. At

other points during her interview, Lynda reveals a tension between being 'rebellious' and not fitting in yet also wishing to please people and conform more.

Others, while finding the tutors' remarks helpful, took a robust view of other people's opinions.

> You've got to have some confidence at this age. You've got to trust your own work without being super-confident. I mean, if you're going to be a bit of a drip and - how can I put it? - expect a gold star for everything you do, as it were, then you haven't evolved very far. Nevertheless, it is nice to know through the assessment of your tutor that you are OK. It's nice to have that feedback. (Nicola)

The receiving of praise as part of a 'reflected appraisal' can also lead to ambiguous and varied responses.

> I love it. I hate it at times, but I love it afterwards (Lynda).

Emotional reaction, it seems, can have its roots in childhood. While for men and women, praise can be both desirable and embarrassing, in some of the women's replies, there appears to be a specific gender-related element, where praise, it could be argued, is functioning to support the status quo, and perpetuate conventional stereotypes.

> Partially like it, partially embarrassed, too. If someone praises me I usually say thank you and it pleases me. But, on the other hand, I do feel this embarrassment. I suppose it depends on who is praising. Is it praising or patronising? I still have problems with praise. I suppose that's childhood; the 'good girl' syndrome; the values that are passed on to us in childhood (Sally).

Praise can engender feelings of insecurity and inferiority.

> For a lot of years, I think, I felt a tremendous lack of confidence, and very insecure. And because my brother completed a full academic life and went on to be fairly successful, I've always, perhaps, felt I was a bit of a failure, a bit of a nonentity. If anybody said anything complimentary, I never believed it. (Teresa)

Yet, acceptance can also be seen as part of the maturing process:

> For years and years I always made excuses for it ... I would always play it down or ignore it. But again, as part of growing up, I've learnt to say thank you. (Teresa).

One student pointed to possible cultural differences in attitudes to praise.

> I feel a certain amount of embarrassment when praised. It's something in the English people that's different from America. In America they say 'thanks very much. In Britain they say 'don't be silly!' (Len)

The converse of praise, criticism, was regarded as not entirely welcome but, if delivered constructively, helpful and is some cases, necessary.

> I hate it. But I need it, I want it in order to improve. But at the same time it makes my heart sink. (Lynda)

> I suppose I don't like to be criticised. But if it's constructive, yes, I'm all for it, really, because that's how you improve ... constructive criticism is a good thing. (Ellie).

As with praise, there were suggestions that coping with criticisms was a sign of maturity. Some people had learned to come to terms with criticism as they had grown older.

> It depends on who's doing the criticising. If I feel it's unfair criticism, I will be angry. But if I feel it's justified, then I think I'll see it positively. I think a number of years ago I would have dissolved into tears if anybody was critical towards me. But I think now it can be a positive thing if done in the right way. (Sally).

> I used to be very upset by it. I used to be very sensitive and I think it was part of this insecurity. So criticism upset me considerably for a lot of years. Now, I am very happy with constructive criticism ... I can accept it for what it is. (Teresa).

The students were also asked whether they tried to live up to other people's expectations. This question was included in order to further explore the notion that other people's expectations influence an individual's attitudes and actions. These

expectations, it was assumed, incorporate elements of appraisal. An athlete, for example, will have his or her own personal goals to strive for; but would work under instruction of a coach who has expectations of that athlete. In the workplace, a formal assessment influences a worker's view of himself and his job and convey expectations being made of that worker. For students on an Open Studies course, the expectations of others may not seem so obvious; or the adults may feel they do not attempt to live up to the expectations of others at all.

> No. I think my expectations are within myself. (Nicola)
>
> Maybe they're my imagined expectations of other people; what I think they're expecting of me. I did used to. Again, now I feel stronger and, no, I'm more prepared to be honest with myself. (Teresa)

Teresa's comments indicate an important point, earlier reflected in Lynda's remarks about the tutor's view of her progress, that people's reactions to others are often based on what they *think* is required. Laing (1966) illustrates how misunderstandings occur through people's 'thinking' what others are 'thinking' of them. He uses the concepts of direct perspective (the way in which a person looks at himself and at another), meta-perspective (a person's opinion of what another thinks of him) and meta-metaperspective (a person's opinion of what another thinks of the first person's opinion of the other) to depict how misunderstandings can occur in interpersonal relationships. If the perspectives fail to match - if Teresa's interpretation of the tutor's opinion of Teresa is incorrect - then misunderstanding arises. It further underlines one of the theoretical orientations of this research, which is that while the integrity of the individual is acknowledged, experience and behaviour are always in relation to

someone or something else (Laing, 1966); that is, the person functions in a social context.

It was assumed that while perhaps not consciously internalised, the expectations of others, would have an impact. A tutor's comment on an assignment, for example, may prompt a student to aim for a higher grade. For the students on the course, there was not always a clear-cut relationship between other peoples' expectations and their own sense of who they were and what they hoped to achieve. While they did take account of other peoples' expectations, they also felt they were far more their 'own person.' Unlike, say, young Lee, for whom the expectations of the teacher - conveyed through direct praise - directly affected behavioural progress, the adult students seemed far more likely to reflect upon other's views before reaching an opinion and taking any action.

> I think I used to (try to live up to others' expectations) but I feel now I am my own person. Of course, my partner does influence me to an extent, but I feel our relationship allows each of us to develop as individuals in our own right. We have a complementary relationship ...(Sally).

In trying, on the one hand, to conform and belong, yet on the other, to be herself and accepted for what she is, Lynda's experience points to the tension that can exist between the individual and other's expectations.

> Yes and no. I do, and then I rebel against it ... I suppose in a way I work outside of society, but so do all my friends ... at least I feel inside society, with our society ... sometimes I make efforts to be more normal ... but then I rebel against it again. With my mother, I'm always trying to appear to be a normal person who does normal things ... I don't want to be seen as a freak. I want to be seen for what I am.' (Lynda).

Social Comparison:

Consideration of reflected appraisals relate to social comparisons. Comparing oneself to others is a key method of evaluating oneself. Rossan (1987; 109) observes that these comparisons not only allow the individual to evaluate his or her current state, but also suggest the possibility of change and the direction these changes could take, ' ... any one of which could reinforce or alter identity'.

Ideas of students' comparison of themselves with others were elicited in two ways, both directly and indirectly. The first was directly, through questions such as: 'To what extent do you feel you identify with others on the course?' 'How far do you feel you share knowledge and experience with others on the course?' 'Are you like your parents in any way?' 'In what ways are you different?' 'If someone was asked to describe you, what would they say?' 'What do you admire most in others?' The assumption was that by considering such questions, the students were thinking of themselves and others and the relationship between the two, so helping to define that relationship and thus themselves through comparison with others (Festinger, 1954). At this point, it is worth recalling Laing's (1966; 20) observation on the self in relation to self's view of other's view of self, since it is a reminder that 'social comparison' is not a one-way or even one-level process, with individuals simply comparing aspects of themselves directly with the attributes of others, as if the 'self' and the 'other' were separate and self-contained inanimate objects. As Laing writes:

> I may not actually be able to see myself as others see me, but I am constantly supposing them to be seeing me in particular ways, and I am constantly acting in the light of the actual or supposed attitudes, opinions, needs, and so on the other has in respect of me.

This highlights both the ever-present possibility of misinterpretation (a person may not actually be able to see him or her self the way others do), but also the fact that comparison seems to be an ongoing, constant process. It suggests that, whether conscious of it or not, people act in the light of what they believe others to be thinking.

To some extent, asking students about ways they identified with others on the course, and how others might describe them, introduces both a direct perspective - ie, how they think they identify - but also a more reflected comparison; they have to put themselves in the position of others. As Laing suggests, this requires them to think about how others might *think* about them. This was revealed to a certain degree in answers such as: 'I know how I would like them to describe me. But I don't know if that's what they would actually say', demonstrating not only awareness of different perspectives held by individuals, but also the process of the 'self' attempting to think about what the 'other' might think of the 'self'.

Although some adults might resist the idea that they compare themselves with others (reaction against the 'keeping-up-with-the-Jones's syndrome), comparisons, it seems, are inevitable.

> I think you can learn from other people. That's the first thing. You can take account of their views, or even accept them, really. It's part of the learning process ... And with people actually involved with unions you can learn just by listening to them, drawing from their experience (Dave)

> I look at contemporaries in my career and things like that, and assess how well, or not so well, that I'm doing ... You learn a lot by watching others. I suppose a lot of our development is by watching other people perform a task ... and because (the course) is structured in such a way, there is a sharing of ideas and experiences ... other people can trigger off different thoughts. (Sally)

Apart from a direct question to students, another way of determining people's sense of themselves in comparison with others was through analysis of such phrases as 'I know what (knife machines) are, *nobody else* does', 'I've stayed a Catholic whereas *other people* haven't' and 'I won't just take 'you will do so and so' ... *the other two do as* they're told'. (emphasis added). These statements were made by students in response to a variety of questions, and not in reply to direct questions about comparison, as mentioned above. In other words, the comparisons emerge indirectly, as a result of the students' general view of themselves and others, not simply as a result of questioning by the researcher. Some social comparisons can affect the way students perceive the night class, their place in the group, and how they perceive themselves in different circumstances.

> I tend to dress up more than the others, wear different sorts of clothes ... the views of others are quite important, really. On the other hand, they're not. I mean, if they were that important I'd probably make more of an effort. I wouldn't walk round in a coat like this. It's disgusting, isn't it? I want to be seen as being respectable when I'm in a working situation. When I'm on the counselling course, I feel that I'm on view as what I am. So then I want to be seen to be .... to look the part. (Lynda)

For Karen, too, comparison with others affected her view of herself and others, and how she approached the course. She had enrolled because she was interested in women's history, but also wanted a course that was a change from her normal routine, and where she could remain 'anonymous.'

> If you're a head teacher, people in groups I'm in always listen to what you say. And even in the heads' groups, now I'm a senior head - I've been there a long time - if I say things, people listen. And when I registered for this course, nobody knew who I was, except for my name.

But apart from wanting to adopt a different, less prominent role herself, she felt her position could also intimidate others.

> ... two people were talking to me, and they said they were very worried about being on the course. They said to me 'if there are any teachers ... we're not going to stay.' So I kept very quiet.

Comparison with parents can affect behaviour and perceptions of self and help to delineate values and attitudes. Karen's mother was stricter and was perhaps 'in awe' of Karen and her sister when they went to school between about 11 and 14 because they 'suddenly seemed to leave her behind.' Being an intelligent person, however, her mother adjusted quickly as they got older. Although she feels she has been less liberal with her own children than her parents were with her, Karen has adopted a similar philosophy of 'not interfering' and giving them as much freedom as possible.

> The interesting thing is that all three of mine, now that they've got past the age of 21, are all doing some higher, continuing education. And I think that's probably because they've been brought up this way, where they make their own decisions.

Others compared and contrasted themselves with their parents in ways that illustrated differences, not just between them as individuals, but in terms of changing cultural attitudes.

> I think there is a strength of character that my mother had. She was a strong personality. I think I have some of that personality But I think I use it in different ways ... We value our son and daughter equally. I don't think that was true as I was being brought up. There was more value placed on boys than girls. (Sally)

> I feel very different from my father ... I don't feel I have very many of his characteristics. In some ways I am very different from (my mother) too in that she is very rigid in her thinking and I don't believe I am rigid in my thinking. (Teresa)

> I think probably in some ways my mother and I are alike, but also I think probably I've grown up more in some ways. (Nicola)

> My mother reckons I'm more like her, yeah, More like her in stature. and such, and uh, she always tells me my ways are more like hers than my father's, you know. Um. Don't know. I don't think anybody's ever said I'm exactly like either of them or ...I've got a character of my own, really. Half of each of them. (Dave).

Comparison, of course, implies differences as well as similarities. And there can be positive and negative differences. Positive differences can be seen in terms of when an individual recognises that he or she is different to someone else, but uses this in a constructive way and draws strength from the differences. With a negative influence, there could still be a sense of continuity, in that the influence of the parents continues to affect the thinking of the students, but that there was also a feeling of rebellion, and attempting 'something different', sometimes deliberately so.

> I think I put more priority on having a good time than they did. I think I'm lazier. They don't go out and get drunk, and I do. (Lynda).

What an individual perceives him or herself *not* to be can contribute to the perception of what that individual *is*. Women on a psychology course which in part prompted this research, for instance, described how they were 'rebelling' against the influence of parents by taking further study and 'finding themselves.' In one case a woman in her 40s described how she felt she was finally beginning to reject the domination of her mother and strike out her own, living for herself rather than someone else.

While it is being argued that Open Studies courses have the potential to become vehicles for personal development in a profound sense of individuals discovering, developing, reinforcing or asserting their identities, there is also the possibility of conflict emerging within relationships as a result of participation in the studies by one

or other of the partners. Virtually all those interviewed reported that they received support and encouragement from family and friends. But in a couple of cases, students confessed that their attendance at night classes was not welcomed by their spouses. One woman was able to cope with this, and was determined to continue with the course. For another, the situation appeared more serious. While the woman did not reveal a great deal about her home life, the impression gained was that her marriage was under threat. It could not be claimed that the marital difficulties arose solely as a result of the woman's participating in an Open Studies course. However, the course was apparently an issue in the relationship, and the woman was determined to continue for as long as possible. Her reason was that she was doing it for herself. She did not want to be dictated to. What she was learning was not only adding to her stock of knowledge, but also making her realise what she was capable of achieving; that, in fact, she was able to learn and develop as a person in her own right. The Open Studies course had become not only an important source of personal fulfilment, but also a statement, almost symbolically so, of the woman's determination to realise her own potential in the face of strong resistance. Here, the comparison with others included that of her husband, in circumstances that were far from easy, and inextricably involved the Open Studies.

The second way of determining people's sense of themselves in comparison with others was through analysis of such phrases as 'I know what (knife machines) are, *nobody else* does', 'I've stayed a Catholic whereas *other people* haven't' and 'I won't just take 'you will do so and so' ... *the other two do as they're told*'. (Emphasis added). In these instances, the individual is defining him or herself by comparison with others without being explicitly asked to do so. The fact that one person is aware that she has

remained a Catholic while others have not, is a defining characteristic of that person's view of herself. Similarly, another person will not simply acquiesce to other's demands, while 'other' people 'do as they're told'. In these cases, individuals are defining themselves, once again, as much in terms of what they are not as what they are. There are, however, comments which reflect admiration of qualities in others to which the individual might aspire. In these cases, there is social comparison related to the individual's perception of what he or she might like to become, reflecting. perhaps, the notion of an 'ideal' self. In other words, to recall Rossan's observation, such comparison can help to reinforce or alter a person's identity. The comments reflect how deeply embedded social comparison is. The following extracts indicate ways in which students compare themselves to others:

> It was like going from one life at home into another life because they were very middle class and genteel.
>
> They were absolutely open-mouthed. They had no idea that people didn't have ready access to money.

In these cases, in which students are talking about moving to new schools, elements of wealth and class predominate. For one, the distinction between her own background and that which she was moving into was so sharp that it was like 'going from one life into another'. Implicit in the second statement is the student's awareness of the relative lack of wealth compared to that which was taken for granted at her new school. In the next statement, the implications of gender differences are clear:

> ... boys went out to work and got the proper career to keep the family, but girls still had to have jobs where you did things for the good of other people.

Not only are career prospects perceived as being different for boys and girls, weighed in favour of boys, but the nature of them, too, is revealing: girls had to 'do things for the good of other people.'

A further source of social comparison impinging upon a student's perception of the value of her studies was that between the student and her immediate superior back in her workplace. This student spoke of resistance to her study from her manager, another woman, which she ascribed to 'professional jealousy.' The comparison here resides in both the student's perception of - and reaction to - her superior's negative attitudes, and the (reported) attitudes of that person towards the student. Ironically, in making the comparison, the manager was, in effect, helping to reinforce the student's identity as a learner aiming to improve her knowledge and skills. Rather than be deterred by the attitude, the student was all the more determined to succeed. The sense of achievement itself was giving the student confidence, and increasing her motivation. The subject matter related closely to the student's deeply-held values, beliefs and attitudes, based as they were on a sense of caring, of other people's welfare, and of a commitment to encouraging others to learn. As the student assimilated the new knowledge, she acquired 'ownership' of it; it became part of her belief system, no longer simply information to be learned from some other source such as, say, a textbook. This knowledge, however, does not exist in a vacuum; not only has the knowledge 'discovered' by the learner been created in a social context, but also the learner 'interprets' what he or she encounters; and that interpretation itself is based on the previous knowledge and experience of the individual, gained as a result of interaction with the environment. In other words, it reflects the socialization undergone by the individual as a result of social influences (Gecas, 1981; 165).

Not all students feel they are influenced by others on the course, however. Lynda saw her style of dress as a statement that she was *not* influenced by others on the course; if she had been influenced, she argued, she would have 'dressed differently.' And Nicola felt what she saw as the omission of direct social comparisons as a contributory factor to the overall unity of the group.

> I suppose that's the reason we're all so friendly. All the attitudes that come across are in accord.

Being 'in accord' is an important component of social comparison, since, it seems, people need to feel they belong.

> ... in our culture, to be in accord with other people satisfies an important psychological need, particularly in situations where people lack certainty or the possibility of validating their own opinions other than by comparison with those held by others. Through such 'social comparison' processes, a common social reality is established and validated. (Brown, 1984; 14).

Setting of and reacting to personal standards:

Rossan comments that the setting of and reacting to personal standards includes the recognition of success and failure, meeting moral standards and acquiring skills and abilities.

> All of them entail the individual setting standards, then comparing the outcome with the original goals.

For the students interviewed, setting and reacting to personal standards was an important source of esteem and perceptions of self. Feelings related to reaching, or failing to reach, personal standards were often deep-rooted, and success or otherwise on the course was a source of great satisfaction or intense discomfort. One student

from the counselling course described her feelings, and how she overcame them, after a tape she had made had been 'referred' - it had not reached a high enough standard:

> When the tutor referred that tape ... I think that's the first time I'd failed an exam in my life, actually. It wasn't really a failure, it was just a referral. I got in the car and drove home. And I got very angry and started shouting a bit in the car. And then the next day I sort of went over the thing and rationalised why she'd possibly have failed me and worked it all out. And then I thought, well, I don't agree with this, so I'll have to get in touch with her. So I got in touch with her and that wasn't satisfactory. So then I turned it round and made it into their fault, if you like. It was their fault. I mean I was going to go to the extent, which is terrible really for a certificate course, of going higher above them and get someone else to mark it. But I thought that would antagonise them for the rest of the term. So forget it. I would say the whole process took three days. And then I forgot it. So that's how I coped with failure then. But I'd never failed an exam. There's always a first time. (Ellie)

The fear of failure was strongly linked to this student's setting of personal standards. In the same interview, she remarked:

> You don't want to be seen to fail, although I didn't really discuss the marks with anybody else. It was *my personal competition with myself.* (Emphasis added).

Another student described her feelings at failing an A-level psychology course before enrolling on the Open Studies:

> I didn't pass the exams ... I was going to do it again this year. And I decided after Christmas to do it. It was an Open Studies ... and I found the lecturer wasn't very helpful. So I decided not to take that. I've never failed an exam it was because of that I didn't study. It was a combination of factors, really ... I have an interest in psychology, but unfortunately, I've been put off. (Hilary)

Rossan identifies three other main sources of identity: Interpretations of Bodily Change, Outcome of Role Negotiations; and Current Identity. Of bodily change, Rossan (1987) points out that physical and physiological changes occur at various points throughout life. Anatomical and physiological changes during adulthood include

changes in "shape, weight, texture of skin and hair, amount of bodily hair, athletic and sexual abilities, and lengths and types of illness." (310). While acknowledging the importance of bodily change, this study has not concentrated greatly on these, since it was felt this would not be not entirely appropriate. Had the study focused, for instance, on expectant mothers (as Rossan did), athletes in training, or difficulties faced by disabled students, then a direct focus on bodily changes would have been necessary. Nevertheless, unprompted allusion or volunteered information about bodily change or outward appearance through dress or other visible signs (eg, hairstyle) has not been ignored, since this reflects underlying concerns, and also attitudes held towards others. These, in turn, can be seen to reflect social and ethical codes and expectations. For example, one young female psychology student, remarked:

> I feel you should wear clothes that are appropriate for your age. If you try to dress to show you are younger, for example, I think you just look silly. (Lena).

A female psychology student in her 50s, however, who enjoyed wearing denim jeans and jacket, commented:

> I like dressing like this. I am comfortable in these clothes. I feel young. I'm still energetic. I think these clothes match my personality. (Laura).

Within the classroom, distinct dress styles reflected different personalities. In one psychology group with a wide age range, a male student in his early 20s, who described himself as an 'anarchist', wore dark, torn jeans, black denim jacket and t-shirt. In the same group was a male in his 60s in check blazer, pullover shirt and tie. One respondent nearing retirement said she had wished for curly hair ever since

childhood; another, who had been seriously ill, made reference to her appearance at the second interview. Apart from this, there was little direct reference to physical changes. When asked about change over the period of study, virtually all students replied in terms of cognitive development and changes in perspective. This, however, could well have been as a result of the interview situation and the expectation that the interview was about the course being undertaken - which it was - rather than anything to do with physical appearance or change.

The outcomes of role negotiation and current identity are closely related, since as Rossan (1987) states:

> Current identity may help to determine the roles to which one aspires, ... the kinds of negotiations about roles into which one enters, as well as the outcome of such negotiations, may influence the interpretation of the appraisal of others and one's feelings about these appraisal... (310)

Furthermore, in terms of role negotiation, Rossan suggests that an important variable influencing identity takes as its model "an active, potent controlling human being." In the context of her own research into expectant mothers, role negotiation refers to how 'self and partner are to think, act and feel.' Rossan argues:

> The partner has expectations about own and partner's behaviour as well. The partners must negotiate the appropriate overt and covert behaviours for both of them. (308).

This is delineating role negotiation in a restricted sense as it applies to partners in a one-to-one relationship. For the purposes of this study, however, a broader conception of role negotiation has been adopted, taking into account the effect both of sub-identities - where individuals can be assumed to behave differently, yet equally appropriately, in different circumstances, thus taking on different and changing roles

(eg a nurse can also be a wife and a mother) - and, specifically, the role of 'student' on an Open Studies course. A reason for the in-depth interviews for this study was to establish, not simply current identity, located in relation to the individual's biography and aspirations for the future, but also to explore individual experiences in the specific 'role' of student. An assumption was that such a 'role' would impact on the identity of the individual to the extent that the learning achieved on the course self-consciously as a student, or member of a particular group, would gradually become assimilated by the individual. The learning of information initially 'out there' and separate from the student, would become part of the student's broader sense of self as an individual, not simply information to be learned as a 'student'.

Being a student, of course, does not simply entail cognitive development; there is a whole social context in which the 'student' operates. Simply attending an Open Studies course can imply certain values and assumptions. During preparation for the research, for instance, adult students on a course at a technical college suggested that the very association with a 'university' could prohibit some people from participating, since the world of 'university' seems remote, irrelevant, and 'elitist.' While this view was not explored in any depth for this research, those sentiments were reflected in some of what people had to say during the course of the study. One health worker, for example, spoke of the difficulties in engendering self-confidence among some groups of women, where, in some cases, encouraging them to socialize and even leave the house was a prolonged task. Such women found it difficult to relate to the concept of 'university.'

For the purposes of this study, however, while the social context is acknowledged, the cognitive development is regarded as an important component not

just in role negotiation, but also role reinforcement and change. The assimilation of the content of the course, as well as the social context in which the learning is taking place, is regarded as having an impact on the individual's identity. The individuals negotiate new roles - and ultimately identities - for themselves; first, self-consciously as 'student' on a course, possibly learning new and difficult material; then as individual with a changed perspective. The information, in other words, is taken in and reflected upon by the individual, and ultimately 'belongs' in a deeper and more meaningful way to that person; the 'role' of student thus becomes incorporated into a broader view of the person's sense of self. The new knowledge becomes not simply information to be learned on a course, but part of the experience of that student (and, ultimately, of an individual who is no longer a 'student' but an 'expert' in the sense of developing an expertise in a particular area).

Interview 2: The destination - Satisfactions and Discontents.

By the end of the two-year period there was a range of outcomes - and not all as expected. The title to this section reflects the students' mixed views of their experience. Of 23 students in the original cohort, 19 were re-interviewed. Two students did not complete their course: one from Labour Studies and one from Women's Studies. An additional student was also interviewed. She had initially not wished to participate in the research, but had 'gained confidence' in the intervening two years as a result of her study meetings (two other students had confirmed this independently of each other) and volunteered to be interviewed. Since the research is about the impact of Open Studies on individuals, her experience was regarded as relevant, and some of her remarks have been included. On the basis of this study, the

hypotheses cannot be rejected outright; neither can they be fully supported. The findings and conclusion are discussed in the next section. Useful observations can be made, however.

All participants reported change of some sort. Yet there were mixed reactions. These not only reflected how students felt they had coped personally with the demands of the work, but were also in terms of how they perceived the course itself; and there were different reactions to the different courses. These included comments on how students related to each other, to the tutor and on course organisation. Different impressions were gained of the relationships within each of the groups, as well as how individual students managed. The Psychology and Women's Studies students appeared to have developed the deepest level of identification with each other in terms of support and friendship (Although more controversial issues arose in the Women's Studies: the topic of feminism in particular appeared to have roused strong feelings. One student on a different Open Studies course reported that she had left the Women's Studies because of its 'feminist bias'; Debbie, had also left complaining about its feminism, and a further student told of how she felt 'strange and ... awkward' attending classes when she was expecting her second child: 'Being a feminist course it didn't feel right going along being heavily pregnant.' She did, however, believe this probably reflected how she felt rather than what others on the course were actually thinking. The closeness of the Women's Studies students was enhanced by the fact that by the end of the two years, a large number had dropped out. Out of an original total of over 30, six or seven completed the course and sat the final exam).

For Kath, the regular self-help Psychology group meetings had become a way of life, where members 'shared' the experience of being on the journey of learning about themselves and others.

> We get on so well. It's a social event, but it's more than that. You have to be disciplined about this. It's just part of my life. I don't see it going on indefinitely. But I shall be very sorry if it stops. We usually decide to study a book. We all read it, then one person goes through it and summarises it and discuss certain aspects. They have a piece of paper with various topics on and we just work our way down. One book will go on for two or three sessions. Then a new book will be brought in and we'll look at that. The shared experience is that we're all on this journey. Were all trying to find out more about ourselves and other people in a non-judgemental way. And that's an exciting thing to be in.

The bond within the group had been strengthened in other ways, too, with the generation differences - Kath is 54, Ken 62; the other three members are in their 20s and 30s - actually helping to stimulate insights and cement relationships.

> The age difference seems to have worked quite well. If we are discussing something, I can put my generation's point of view over. In many ways, the girls' view of life is so totally different. Their upbringing is so totally different. Women have moved on in a different way between my generation and theirs. Everything has changed, materially, educationally. The opportunities are there that weren't there when I was growing up. It's quite useful that I can put, not their mothers' point of view, because I don't know what their mothers' point of view was, but at least to say: 'Look, thing's weren't like that when your mothers were having you. It was a different world.'

But it has been a two-way process, and Kath has also learned from the younger people's view, in a different way than she would with her own daughter, with whom she has had a good and open relationship.

> ... they put things, too; their own points. I've always been pretty open-minded and my daughter and I have got on well and she's able to say whatever she wants to me. She probably wouldn't say the things they would say because I'm her mother and its a different context.

As a result, the group feels able to support and learn from each other.

> You learn. Every time you get together you learn something else. So that's been rewarding.

Women's Studies

Kath's comments were reflected on the Women's Studies course, too, both terms of subject matter - ie, a shared academic interest - and in personal relationships in a wider context. Beth, for example, who had 'felt awkward' at being pregnant, had nevertheless asserted in the first interview, not long into the course, that there was a shared experience between the women, and that in fact they had quickly formed into 'quite a merry band.'

> We can understand each other. We actually know what we're suffering. through different things. Trying to study while being married, or having full-time jobs, or part-time jobs, or children, we're all striving for something. ... I'm not really sure what ... with Women's Studies we discuss women and children and I'm both married and I've got a child. So perhaps if I don't make up for it in academic ability, I do with sort of life experience.

As a result of the course, not only had Beth definitely decided to aim for a part-time degree (she had also studied Open Studies History in addition to the Women's Studies), but the feminist perspective had affected her thinking.

> I found that I started to disagree with things when I was pregnant that I'd agreed with before. It was a bit of a change. My view is changing. It's really weird, odd ... I'm beginning to make more of a space for myself.

Despite her feelings of awkwardness at being pregnant, the other students had been 'quite protective' of her (some were themselves mothers) and by the end of the course, a close-knit group had developed, and had remained in contact even though the course

had ended. Part of the closeness was due to the shared experience the students had undergone.

> We have got quite close and shall definitely stay in contact ... We started off with over 30 and ended up with 6 or 7. So we really felt quite proud because we'd survived it.

She felt so many dropped out, partly because it was Open Studies and students could opt in and out as they pleased, but also because the psychology element of the course 'seemed to finish a lot of people off.' This was also reported by the other Women's Studies students interviewed. Beth describes how the effect of 'surviving' the psychology element contributed towards the growing closeness of the group as a whole.

> ... the psychology ... was the first course in the second year and we did seem to lose a lot of people there. But then we went on to imperialism. This was the politics element of the course. People ... were very glad they had stayed for that part of the course and had survived the psychology. It really picked up again, but by then we had lost quite a few. We'd survived the first year, we'd survived the psychology and then it was going to be the exam. We sort of had quite a little support group in the end.

The support functioned in a number of ways, sharing course books if they were difficult to obtain, helping to find material in the library, sharing information that might help with different aspects of the course, but also extending beyond the classroom as moral support if students felt overpowered by the demands of the course.

> ... we would ring each other up. One of the girls was about to throw it all in and rang me. And I was about to give up the ghost, and rang one of the other girls. So we did start to stick together really, Which was very nice. We were all very close by the end of the course. The attitude was very open... It was very good.

Debbie, who had been in the original cohort of Women's Studies students interviewed, left the course for a more business-oriented one. She had strongly criticised what she

perceived to be the prominent feminist element on the course. She was convinced the course was trying to turn her into a 'raging feminist.'

> They very much tend to look at things from a feminist point of view and never seem to want to include the opposite side of the coin. And I get some pretty fierce looks when I do ... I find it awfully biased. The really will not put both sides ... It really is unbelievable.

As a strong and forceful woman, she describes herself as 'independent, self-confident and ambitious.' Other people tend to see her as headstrong, and she had been described at work as 'absolutely the tyrant.' She felt the other students regarded her with 'a little bit of awe, in that they can't cope with the job that I do.' This had led to further confrontation

> ... about sexual discrimination at work and 'why don't I get anywhere' and 'the men keep me down' came out. And I said 'rubbish,' you just will not apply for the jobs, you will not go out and compete.' They did not like that at all and had to ask how I regard myself and why I'm in a job and how I got the job I've now got. I suppose, to some extent, there is a little bit of, not animosity as such, but ... I don't know how to describe it ... I'm very strong-willed ...

She felt there was a difference in attitudes between her and the other students. If a job were advertised, she would consider whether she could do the job or not, and never look at it from a feminist or chauvinist point of view, whereas others, she felt, would adopt the attitude of 'I'm a girl. I won't get that job ... They sit and moan, but they won't go out and do.' She identified a younger group 'who have not had much life, got married and had children and are beginning to realise they've missed certain aspects of life' and older group 'who have come to the idea that if you are at home with kids, there's no question about it. You do not do a career if you're a married woman.' She had actually resumed a career and study programme because she found that taking two years off with her own child 'did not suit.'

Yet, despite the feminist bias, and the fact that she actually left the course, she felt she had learned from it. She had not realised that some women feel as badly as they do, and that perhaps she takes life too easily.

> It certainly made me question on what level I do compete ... If I'm entertaining a client I need to impress, then, yes, I'll get the make-up on and the posh frock out. If I've got a director's meeting, funnily enough I'll go in as sort of dark suit and shirt and so on, maybe as a man would, because quite often I'm the only woman there. It did make me think on that.

She felt the course had enabled her to look at matters in a wider context. Other people's views were important, since they enabled her to know what they were thinking. Working in personnel 'sex discrimination and so on should occur to me and it hasn't. Being a student on the Women's Studies course made me think about it.'

Labour Studies

The Labour Studies students also appeared to have developed a strong sense of identification with each other, but in a less personal way than the other two groups (they had not met socially outside the course as the other groups had done). They generally had a shared background of interest and involvement in unions, but this was more focused on their own particular needs in relation to the job they were doing. Their reasons for being on the course seemed more closely related to the specific roles they had back in their workplace. Generally, students on the course were also drawn more widely from across the Midlands (Leicestershire and Worcestershire, for example), and had to travel 'quite some distance' to attend the classes; (one was reported as having to make a 100-mile round trip). Indeed, the four students interviewed for this research were all from different areas. Students interviewed from

other courses were from more or less the same area, and did not have to travel so far. Yet the Labour Studies students all reported learning from others' experience. Here Leon, not a union member, describes his experience on the group, reflecting both the particular interests of the individuals on it, and his own feelings about the material:

> It was mostly unions' work. It was very useful for the union members who were especially shop stewards ... I was neither ... a member of the unions, nor a shop steward. But it was interesting because in that course they taught all the principles o f communism, Marxism, Leninism and social problems of the community as well. I'm interested in social studies, so that was very good. The second year was a bit hard because it covered politics, economics and other things as well. It was international politics, economics, industrial economics, business studies. All the things. I did complete, because there were very good people in the class. Everybody was interested to study ... and decided to take the examination Some passed with good marks. The certificate in Labour Studies was very good. Very useful for their work as shops stewards and union work.

He described how he had learned from a combination of the course material, and hearing from the practical experience of other members on the course:

> We were learning from the handout ... and the books. ... But when the other people were discussing, they were practical. It was the work in the union, being the shop stewards. So I was theoretical and they were practical. That was the difference. They were being very good ... They were very friendly It was very good.

This was also reflected in Steve's comments:

> You have got this camaraderie. In fact, you don't particularly want to let the others down.

Part of the impact of the course, in fact, for all the Labour Studies students, had been listening and learning from others' experiences:

> We were discussing the role of the housewife and Carole came up with a point that I must admit was so simple and so obvious that I had never thought about it in that light before ... I suppose what I've picked up ... is really the experiences they've had in their lives. Up to then, your limitations are what you really know in your own life.

> ... On any course, you pick up the experience that other people have had in their lives. And I think that's enriching; to find out what other people have done and what other people's thoughts are.

The friendliness and interchange of ideas was there, then; but relationships beyond the course did not seem to have developed in the way that they had with the Psychology and Women's Studies Groups. At an individual level, keeping up with the workload could be difficult.

Sam was confident at the beginning of the course, but found it more difficult than he had anticipated.

> It was a bit difficult. I never got to grips with it completely. With the work outside the university. Never really got into a routine, I don't think. So although I attended virtually all of the lectures ... just one night a week for 10-week terms ... although I did those, it was a bit of a struggle. I did very little work outside that

Writing essays had proved problematic:

> I had to do one essay per term, each module. I used to struggle with that at the end to get that done, and really ... I didn't really enter into the routine of setting time aside and doing reading and things like that

He had completed most of his studies at his workplace, usually directly before the night class:

> The main time I did the work, really, was, er, because I work ... not far from the university and finish work at quarter to five, I didn't need to leave work until, say, twenty to seven to get to the university. So I basically did the work then, between quarter to five and, say, 6.30. So I had, like, an hour and a half, an hour and three-quarters to do any reading, or whatever.

This was partly because of the constraints on travel:

> It would have taken, have been about an hour's driving to go home, have

> something to eat, get changed, or whatever and then drive back again. It would have taken about an hour's drive, so I elected to stay at work and have and have a sandwich and do the work I should have been doing.

Just as Steve and Leon had to fit coursework around other heavy commitments, Sam also found it difficult to complete work at other times of the week because of other pressures:

> It was just finding time to sit down and read, just read. Just through the pressures of things at home, really. You know, my wife and son; their claims on my time, plus other interests I've got.

However, he had enjoyed the course and found it helpful, and was now embarking upon further study.

Counselling

The least unified group appeared to be the Counselling students. This observation featured in all the Counselling group interviews. Despite the subject matter of the course, and the fact that all five Counselling students at interview 1 had expressed the similar desire to put their counselling skills to use, the group as a whole, by interview 2, was seen as being divided, and registered the least overall satisfaction with the course. It is worth recording that of all the groups at the outset of the research, the 15 or so students on the Counselling course had, to a woman, volunteered to participate in the study, and expressed a positive attitude towards the project. (Constraints on time and resources prevented further numbers being interviewed). In the very early stages of the course, a Counselling tutor had observed that the group seemed to have split into different 'factions'. This proved to be perceptive. Although the students felt they had got on at first, by the end of the course it was felt that the group as a whole had not 'gelled'. This should not be taken at face value, however. Friendships were

established, and there were reports of sharing experience and supporting each other in course work. Yet there seemed to be a tension between the group as a whole being 'very nice people' and an underlying dynamic which prevented them from coming together in quite the way that might have been expected. The diversity of the background seems to have been both a strength and a weakness. The strength was manifest broad range of experience, interest, and 'personalities'.

> It's rich with personalities. And I think it's interesting that we're all female ... I think that coming from such a wide range of background does enrich the course. I enjoy sharing information ... we all have a common goal. (Sally)

> I get on very well. There are a lot of personalities. Like any walk of life, you click with some personalities better than you click with others. (Teresa).

> They're a good group. We all tend to like each other and get on well with each other. (Nicola).

Yet hints of possible differences and underlying tensions reveal themselves in comments such as 'we were a bit wary at first', 'are some very strange people', 'born-again Christians,' 'middle-aged do-gooders',' when describing the course. Political attitudes, too, revealed themselves.

> Whatever the subject might be, you know, abortion, the right-wing element will come out. It's just things like that. (Lynda)

By the end of the course, the strength of feeling, and apparent alienation of some members of the group, surprised the students interviewed, especially as it was counselling where consideration for people's feelings and problems was assumed to be integral to the nature of the task.

> The group ... didn't come together in the second year ... I felt all right about it because maybe I'm living on a different plain. I don't know. I'm quite a gregarious sort of person. I made one or two

> friends. You sort of form a natural affinity with people with a similar sense of humour or whatever ... but about six weeks before the end of the course, one of the women stood up and gave a passionate outburst about how she hated the course and how she felt alienated by everybody. And two other people joined in and said they felt the same. And I was absolutely staggered, because I didn't realise what was going on in their minds. I did know that one of these people herself badly needed counselling. I think that happens on counselling courses ... I don't feel as though the course gelled. (Ellie).

> It was an odd group. I think it was something, perhaps, about the environment. Once we reached the classroom each week, we seemed to take on different relationships. Outside the classroom, the group dynamics were far better. It was really quite a strange reaction we had. A lot of us recognised this. It really was ... a strange set up. (Sally).

The phenomenon identified by the tutor at the outset of the course, of students identifying with different 'factions', seem to have been partially confirmed.

> I suppose people tended to sit in groups. The same groups each week. And, not hostility, but just different individuals were at different points in relationships ... the group I tended to sit in, we'd have good relationships. But I think others feel threatened, or not have such a good relationship with others outside the group. And it was strange because we were all mature, adult people, recognising what was going on and yet it carried on. (Sally).

There seemed, also, to be tension between students and tutors.

> ... two tutors hadn't worked together before and they were unsure of what had gone on in the first year. I don't think they were particularly confident about coming into the group. I think when they came in the second year, they could have facilitated the group dynamics better ... we just tended to slip into this sitting with the same people each week ... (Sally).

Ellie also felt personal tension between her and the tutor:

> I'd sensed in class that the female tutor didn't like me very much, because I was a bit too frivolous. You know, I'd crack a joke and she'd quite often say: 'Can we keep this serious, please'. And you know that feeling you get that, you know, 'she's taking this in too trivial a way'. And, of course, if

> I said something and everyone else laughed, and she was in the middle of doing something. She didn't like it.

She felt she was being punished for her behaviour, and described the feeling almost as a child would. After having had a tape referred back to her, Ellie made a second in which she had 'stuck to the book' but which she felt was mediocre, yet which 'passed with flying colours.' she felt the tutor was 'making a point':

> I may be very wrong, here but I felt as though she were getting her own back when she actually referred my tape ... The other tape ... passed with flying colours. I think she just wanted to punish me a little bit for being naughty in class.

Relationships were far better outside the classroom, when students were able to mix and talk more freely. One possible interpretation of these particular dynamics, where there appear to have been, within the classroom, psychological boundaries between students and between students and tutor, can be drawn from research into group behaviour. A group can be seen as a 'psychological relationship or cognitive process or both' (Brown, 1984; 96). It is important for individuals to belong to groups, since this contributes to both personal and social identity (Tajfel, 1978). To experience positive social identity in a group, members 'must be capable of differentiation from other groups' (Brown, 1984; 82), since this discriminates between 'ingroup' (those who belong) and 'outgroup' (those who do not) which in turn enhances the social identity; Festinger (1954) proposed that through this process of social comparison, individuals validate their behaviour or attitudes, particularly where 'objective' criteria are lacking. Every group needs to maintain a positive social identity in relation to other groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Because of the apparent differences within the larger Counselling group as a whole - there were a range of 'personalities' - it seems plausible

that the smaller groups formed, where easier identifications between individuals could be made. The gradual reinforcement of the social identity of these subgroups, however, is likely to have intensified the differences *between* subgroups. Any tension between the students and the tutors is likely to have further reinforced the identity of the subgroups, since it would perpetuate the ingroup/outgroup structure. The result would be a group with conflicting dynamics - and individuals, perhaps, who feel excluded.

Nevertheless, the students interviewed were glad they had taken the course, and identified ways in which they could use the skills, although none felt the course had prepared them adequately for the kind of professional counselling they wished to follow.

In summary, the results reflect the complex process of students undertaking Open Studies courses. The main emphasis has been on the Psychology group and those taking the certificated courses. Individual experience has been wide and varied, from a student tentatively setting out to see if she could sustain a year's study who is now looking to take a degree, through to the business woman who embarked upon Women's Studies believing it would enhance her career prospect, only to find that she left to take a different course, but not before confronting the ideological force of feminism. A student who felt confident of coping at the beginning of the Labour Studies, discovered it was more difficult than anticipated; another, who knew nothing of the studies at the outset, is now able to discuss politics and economics in detail. Students on the Counselling course, aiming to move into professional counselling, felt that although they had benefited from the course, it had not gone quite as hoped, and that the door to professional counselling had not opened far, if at all.

The groups themselves, have generated surprising and varied results, from the self-help Psychology group, which had become a 'way of life' for its members, and seemed destined to continue for the foreseeable future, through to the Counselling group, which had a range of 'good caring people' and 'personalities' , who had been most eager to participate in the study, and whose members were concerned to apply their learning for the benefit of others, and yet discovered late in the course that members in their own midst were feeling emotionally distressed and alienated.

The results show, too, the highly complex and varied influences that exert themselves on individual behaviour, from individual biographies, to relationships with others on the course, and perceptions about what those others think of the self. Overall, a cognitive complexity emerges, depicting individuals as complex, sometimes contradictory beings, attempting to make decisions and follow routes that lead to greater understanding of themselves and others.

But does this indicate how the courses have impacted upon personal identity? Does Rossan's model prove a useful way of approaching student experience? Are there any other issues that would aid understanding? It is to these questions and others that part 2 of the discussion section now turns.

9. Discussion: Hypotheses revisited - identity and issues

So far, this research project indicates that the adults undertaking Open Studies courses, and certificated courses in particular, had changed to a greater or lesser extent over the two-year period. But how much of that change can be attributed to the courses themselves, and what evidence is there, if any, to support the hypotheses? Because of the qualitative nature of the research, and the difficulties in establishing what might be regarded as 'control groups', it is not easy to distinguish scientifically the effects of the course from the effects of other areas of the students' lives. However, because of the focus of the research methodology, it is possible to identify areas in which the students themselves felt that the course had influenced them. Furthermore, this research is unlike a scientific survey which might, for instance, be trying to measure the effects of a particular reading scheme on young people, and be concerned with standardizing conditions across all groups, manipulating variables and so on (Greene and D'Oliveira, 1985). In the case of this study, the adults have voluntarily chosen to embark upon Open Studies courses, and so it is reasonable to assume that there will already be some expectation of change (Parrott, 1985). This will not impair the evidence in the sense of rendering the data unusable, however. For the question is not so much whether change has occurred, but the nature and quality of that change as related to the Open Studies, and what effect it has had on the adults' sense of identity as defined.

It might be argued that students would acquiesce, and provide answers they thought the researcher wanted to hear. Two safeguards against that have been (i) the

duration and (ii) the timing of the interviews: that is, lengthy, in-depth sessions around two years apart. On the one hand, the length and structure of the interviews - with internal checks on information - would make it difficult for an individual to sustain a deliberately 'false' or misleading account. On the other hand, the length of time between interviews would make it difficult for the interviewee to remember exactly what was said at the previous meeting. In this sense, the researcher has an advantage, being in possession of tape-recorded interviews and field notes.

A third safeguard was the cross-checking of comparative data between interviews. Although each student gave his or her own, individual account, there were not only consistencies between these accounts, with students on different courses reporting similar kinds of experience, but also independent references by interviewees to other students or tutors on the course. These helped to establish both the validity and reliability of individual narratives. This could be set against the additional information drawn loosely from the post-graduate research students. Although these were different groups, with their own aims and objectives and reasons for studying, all were involved in the 'learning experience', and so from that point of view, provided useful general cross-reference data. Furthermore, similar experiences by different students might have been expected, since although the adults were taking different courses, they were all following a similar structure over a similar period and were undergoing a similar form of learning (ie, they were all taking Open Studies courses). This provided another 'internal' check on student reports. Some researchers do not consider 'validity' a prime concern in qualitative research (Wolcott, 1990), while Measor (1985) has pointed to the 'intuitive' reaction and to whether data are 'real' and valid. Students' unprompted references to particular individuals, however, was open to chance. It is always possible

that this would not have happened. Although this provided a useful check, to have relied upon this solely as a method of establishing reliability and validity would have incurred a high - and unwise - risk.

A particular approach has been adopted towards the students in this work. Although drawing on the experience of individuals from different courses, and pulling out broad themes, the research begins at the level of the individual, and that individual is regarded as a multi-faceted, rational and active agent, interacting with his or her environment. This level is underpinned with reference to the philosophical concept of ethical individualism and in particular the notion of 'eudaimonism' (Waterman, 1984) which contributes towards the articulation of the special quality of being an individual. The theoretical orientation of the work itself, while falling broadly within a humanistic, social psychology, is nevertheless eclectic, drawing on different disciplines - psychology, philosophy, education - rather than any single one, to convey the complexity of individual adult life. This orientation has been further related to actual experience of being an adult, an experience perhaps taken for granted, yet highly complex and ambiguous (Rogers, 1989). Reference has been made to the literature on adults, and the challenges and changes they encounter and have to adapt to. Western adult liberal education has been shown to embody concern for the individual and personal growth and development as well as the more vocational or 'instrumental' function of matching skills and knowledge to the requirements of society (Hostler, 1981). The assumption of growth and development in adulthood, and that there is a continuing potential to be realised, reflects the further theoretical assumption that socialization, the process through which the individual learns to become a full member of his or her society (Murphy, 1984), takes place throughout life, and is not merely

confined to childhood, as widely believed until relatively recently (Brim and Wheeler, 1967; Bush and Simmons, 1981; Gecas, 1981).

Such growth and development also assumes cognitive change, which, it has been argued, continues beyond the Piagetian benchmark of formal operations, regarded by Piaget as the height of cognitive development. In other words, it is considered that adults continue to learn, to change, to develop and to acquire new perspectives on themselves and others. This continued learning and the acquisition of new perspectives contributes towards their sense of self and identity, since 'self' and 'identity', as well as having affective components, in that individuals experience emotions and basic physical needs are also cognitive structures (Horrocks and Jackson, 1972; Kreitler and Kreitler, 1987) which change through interaction with the environment, so providing new and evolving perceptions of the 'self' (as an object) in that environment. Issues concerning self and identity thus remain of significance throughout life, and once again are not merely the concerns of childhood and, in particular, adolescence.

It is assumed, then, that questions of identity continue to be of relevance to adults, and that learning in a deliberate and structured continuing education context, in this case through Open Studies, can help adults to define and redefine themselves, in terms of who and what they are and what they might become. This has been explored through Rossan's (1987) model of identity which has been used as a guiding concept throughout the work. Hypotheses relating to Rossan's model were devised as a guide to interviewing students in order to elicit their experiences and assess the impact of Open Studies on their sense of identity. The results of those interviews were presented in the previous section, with substantial emphasis being given to the words of the students themselves. The results are both intriguing and complex. No attempt was

made in that section to determine whether the hypotheses could be supported or not. That is the task this discussion now addresses. Each hypothesis will be discussed in turn before any final conclusions are drawn. For convenience (avoiding the need to continually refer back) the hypotheses will be repeated - to form separate section headings - followed by discussion, using selected quotations.

Hypothesis 1

Knowledge gained as a result of the learning experience arising from the course will become incorporated into the students' experience of themselves as individuals - that is, it will become 'internalised', rather than remaining 'external' to the student - and to that extent will impact on the student's sense of self. This will involve changes in perspective and the students' sense of 'who they are'.

The evidence suggests that students had internalised information from the course in a way that changed their thinking about themselves and others. The learners had gained this information from both the coursework itself, and equally importantly, from discussion between students, where they felt they could learn from each other's experience. At the end of the two years Steve, for example, was undecided about pursuing further study because of the commitment this would entail, but the course had nevertheless given him new understanding in certain areas.

> ... it certainly made me a lot more aware of issues that perhaps I knew were there but hadn't taken possibly as much interest in, or hadn't got as much knowledge as I've got now, in those particular areas. So it's broadened my knowledge if nothing else ... it's certainly broadened my horizons on particular subjects.

Although he had attended an open evening on behalf of his union's education committee, and had not, in fact, intended taking the course himself, its impact had been experienced not only in terms of reflecting upon his job, but also on his actions and relationships with others. He had reorganised his union workload, taking account of both work and home life, and secondly, had increased awareness of people's roles in the union structure and, with new insight, responded differently to this than he had done previously. He reorganised his work in different ways, including delegating tasks and restructuring meetings:

> ... it's made me look at the whole manner in which I conduct my own dealings within the branch. I'm actually, possibly as a result (of the course), farming out a lot of the duties that I would normally do.

He had also adopted a new approach to meetings:

> I've actually changed the structure of my meetings now. The correspondence always used to be listed down. Now I list them by officer. And what I've said is that the publicity officer is totally responsible for the correspondence they get ... It might have to go in my name ... but they deal with everything. It's had a contribution towards that. I've re-thought, if you like, my values in life.

The knowledge acquired from the course, then, had been incorporated into Steve's thinking - or 'internalised' - to the extent that it had changed his work practice. This reassessment had also affected his home life, since before the course, Steve's office had been at his home.

> I've never had a union office. The union office ... was my front bedroom. As a consequence, it had a knock-on effect. None of the other members of the branch could actually use (the computer) unless they actually came to the house. And nobody likes that. There could have been a constant stream of people coming to the house to use the computer. Now at last we have got a union room at work. We embarrassed the management into giving us one ...

While the acquisition of an office cannot be attributed solely to his attendance on the Labour Studies course, the new perspective that he argues he gained from the course contributed to an overall review of his work and determination to change his practice. In terms of impact upon Steve's identity, the reassessment resulting from the course has caused him to think about himself and his relationship with others, and as he says, rethink his 'values in life.' This suggests there has been change not only at the sub-identity level (related to work practice) but possibly also at the 'core' (related to 'values'). As with the other students interviewed, these findings could not be based on the response to single questions alone, but emerged over the course of the interviews.

As previously indicated, students on the Counselling course came away with mixed feelings. They felt they had learned something about counselling, but not enough to qualify them for taking any immediate steps in becoming a counsellor, which is what many of them wished. In addition, there was shock at the 'alienation' some students felt on the course. This in itself, however, had been a 'learning experience' and made some of the students realise that they could not take the classroom situation for granted. It heightened awareness of what some people could be going through, which actually provided an insight into the counselling situation. Ellie said it made her realise she could not take things for granted.

> You simply can't take things at face value. You can't go on appearances. If someone comes for counselling, you cannot make any snap judgements.

Nicola, who, as a lecturer, is involved in counselling students at a college, felt the course had taught her to be a better listener:

> The one very good thing ... is that we were taught listening skills, and it wasn't till we actually did that, and we did that awfully, that I realised how I was a very bad listener. And as listening ... is incredibly crucial to counselling, that was very, very beneficial.

As well as the listening skills Nicola feels she gained, she also believes she is a better observer of people:

> I'm much more aware of their body language. I'm more keenly attuned altogether to how they are. If they move a foot or something like this ... I suppose if I were honest, I study these people more, and go into them in depth and see where we go from there. I feel that I'm better at what I do ... and that is satisfying.

The way these skills had been learned was largely through role play:

> ... that was very good. There seemed to be an awful lot of it, but it was very good. It helped me to pick up the necessary skills.

Nicola felt the course had influenced her learning and understanding:

> My learning has definitely moved on. I'm much more aware.

The course then, seems to have had an impact on Nicola. In terms of 'internalising' knowledge, it appears this has become part of 'who' Nicola is. What she has learned has become part of her general awareness and outlook on life, not simply a role-play exercise in the classroom. And the certificate itself is regarded as enhancing her status:

> I'm not just a qualified teacher doing counselling on the side, but I've got a qualification from a university, albeit at certificate level.

Other students, too, reported various ways in which the course they had undertaken had impacted upon them to the extent that they could identify how they had changed (lifestyle, taking a degree, etc). All the students on the self-help group, for instance, reported a change in their lives as a result of the Open Studies psychology course they

took. This was manifest not simply in their verbal reports, but in the fact that they actually met each week, and had developed a close bond. As some had remarked, the group had become 'a way of life'. All the students had also, independently, paid tribute to the psychology tutor who had inspired them.

Hypotheses 2:

Because of the nature of the courses providing structured learning over an extended period of time, completion will increase students' critical awareness of themselves and how they relate to others, enabling them to more fully articulate (1) their sense of distinctness from others, (2) their sense of commonality with others in terms of shared experience and knowledge and (3) their sense of continuity of personal development, where previous experiences will be seen to have a bearing on current choices and identity.

There is evidence that students had increased critical awareness of themselves and their relationship with others.

Hilary had extended her knowledge and understanding beyond the classroom and to the women she dealt with as a health visitor. Beth reported a different, more positive - more assertive - view on her role as mother and especially wife. Steve's learning had not simply resulted from the textbooks he had read, but also from interaction with other students. His is a good example of learning through interaction. In fact, he attributed much of the increased awareness of his relationship to others - particularly to the position of women in employment - to group discussion:

> From a woman's angle within the union. I suppose, to a certain extent, I was putting a bar on the women's knowledge because, not just women's, the men's

> as well, because I would be letting them do so much and no more, if you like.

And

> I thought 'what would happen if I packed it in or retired or something like that? They wouldn't know how to deal with the rest of it.

Yet it was from a woman on the course that he felt he gained most insight into other people's experiences.

> I think I learned more from the input of the woman ... than possibly with the males ... many a time she'd come out with something that ... I mean, when we were doing about class, and the various types of classes. The higher up the social ladder you were the more you related to your children in different manners ... It was Hilda who brought that out. I must admit I'd never actually thought about it. But I realised yes, it was correct. I realised what she was saying. She was giving a different perspective on things.

Steve also learned from Hilda about the experience of being a single parent:

> She's a single parent. She worked part time ... She was very much a single parent with two children ... and she was giving a viewpoint from that angle. If it had been just the five or six men, we just wouldn't have had that view. It would have been from just that viewpoint. The perspective would have been purely and simply males all in full-time employment. So Hilda brings in the womanly aspect of it and she also brings in the part-time aspect it.

This learning through discussion became integrated not only into Steve's perspective on his work practice but was also directed back into his academic work. Two of his essays were based on unions from the woman's point of view. These had raised his awareness of issues faced by women in general and the experience of a single-parent and part-time worker in particular, something that contrasted with the experience of being a male in full-time employment.

> One of my essays was *trade unions need women more than women need trade unions* and another one was on *equality*. So we've got the womanly aspect, the single-parent aspect - because she was single parent money was tight for her - and, I suppose, from a part-time worker ... a lot was covered.

Another of his essays addressed the issues of sex equality, the sex discrimination act and equal pay legislation.

> I found it a tremendous help ... don't get me wrong. Take my union exec. committee. Proportionately in ratio to the number of workers, there's more women to men. The president of my branch is a woman, the chair is a branch is a woman ... more than 50 per cent of the branch offices. But they're all full time, so I haven't got this part-time perspective. With Hilda, I'd got virtually a lot of what I wanted in one. Personally I've actually encouraged it. When I joined the exec. committee in 1979 there was only one woman on ... And that was the present branch president who's continued all the way. I think it's gradually over the years. I think they give a totally different angle.

Nicola, from the Counselling course, felt the 'distinctness' from others when other students complained bitterly about feeling 'left out'. This had been a shock to a number of students on the course. But there were other ways, too, in which she described her sense of difference as a result of attending the course.

> I suppose I think to myself that there are other women of my age at vicarage tea parties and having coffee mornings and here am I sitting at this silly desk at this university doing this blinking exam. So the fact I passed ... is an achievement ... to a certain extent.

The remarks were 'tongue in cheek' but illustrate how attending an Open Studies course can contribute to an individual's sense of who they are by comparison with others who are doing different things. For Nicola, learning, and particularly counselling, are valued activities, relating to her Christian ideals of helping others. She was not entirely satisfied with the course:

> I can see too many holes ... But maybe one can find holes in everything to do with education, because it's not an exact science.

Yet felt she was making the most of her time, which gave her a sense of purpose and direction.

As for sharing the experience with other students, Ellie and Sally indicated that the course never really 'gelled', although towards the end - after things had come to a 'merry head' - some students met outside and that was when people 'actually started to share'. Three of the students mentioned this directly, and reported how they felt that the students then began to get to know each other. This was on more than on a superficial level. Some students had revealed traumatic incidents in their lives, and it was felt this was a sign that some of the 'barriers' were being dropped.

Hypothesis 3:

As a result of the acquisition of key concepts and associated language presented on the course, students will be able to confidently articulate those concepts when related to the broader context of their lives outside the course.

The results indicate that the students were able to articulate the concepts they had acquired and relate them to the broader context of their lives outside the course. But this has not been as clear-cut as might have been expected. In their interviews, for instance, some students explicitly used the names of theorists or concepts they had been introduced to. In other cases, they did not, but their thinking had nevertheless changed as a result of the course. Dave, for example, did not quote specific theorists yet argued he had revised his views on 'life', 'work' and 'relationship' with others. Although he left the course, he was able to 'confidently articulate' concepts, because they had become part of his changed perspectives, not because he could remember, 'parrot-fashion', specific detail from a textbook. Part of Dave's decision to change course was down to what he had learned on Labour Studies.

Ellie spoke confidently about Gerard Egan's model of counselling and the structure of the course:

> They could structure the course in a better way really. Instead of spending the whole year on Gerard Egan's model, I think I would like to have known some theory first, because then it could be incorporated into role playing in the second year. I think they got it the wrong way round really. They should have got the theory and concepts of the different problems you encounter in the first year, and then in the second year put it all into practice. I'd have felt better with that ...

If the notion of cognitive growth and the construction of 'schemas'. or packages of knowledge is recalled from the section on cognitive development in adulthood, then it can be seen that Ellie's cognitive map of the course and how she would reorganised it is quite mature. She uses the name of one of the key theorists, but in the broader context of re-shaping the course in her own mind. This may seem 'obvious' - anyone who has completed a course might be expected to remember some of it and have opinions on it - but the point is, that cognitive development must have occurred for the student to be able to do this. Ellie has built up a cognitive map of the course and is able to manipulate mental representations of it.

Len, too, has taken concepts from his psychology course which have become part of his thinking. On the one hand, there is the 'threat' posed by psychological knowledge.

> Some friends feel a bit threatened by ... psychology ... If they see you getting something out of doing the course, or a book, either they want to get some of it from you, or they feel threatened, and don't want to know anything at all about it.

He had gained insight into people's perceptions and his own feelings about others, such as his father:

> ... the fact that I realised everybody's perception is different. You can have

> one act that can be perceived in a million different ways ... Again your perceptions change ... Going back to my father, it appeared he wasn't very forthcoming. But, in fact, it was probably a two-way thing, as with most people.

In these cases, the students had not articulated concepts from the course in the sense of directly quoting sections or particular theorists from it in a mechanical fashion (indeed, that would have been almost rote learning, and not how concepts are used in 'real life'. Cognitive development involves interpretation; this means knowledge will be 're-created' and used according to the individual's prior learning and the context in which the new knowledge is applied).

The main point to take from this is that the students do seem to have internalised information from the course to the extent that they articulate the concepts, albeit in an 'interpreted' form, in the broader context of their lives.

Hypothesis 4

An effect of the learning process, and the internalisation of new knowledge, will be cognitive dissonance, which tends to be accompanied by unsettling emotions such as anxiety, anger, frustration and confusion. Resolution of this dissonance, however, will impact upon the students' sense of identity in that it will lead to positive self-regard and contribute to the individual's changing perspectives and sense of well-being.

Taken at face value, this was - perhaps surprisingly - one of the more difficult hypotheses to explore. By and large, the students did not report feelings of anxiety, anger or depression, although some were concerned at the beginning of the course about their ability to cope with the extra demands, and one or two reported they had experienced difficulties during the course. But the apparent lack of cognitive

dissonance was surprising, since of all the effects hypothesized, such feelings are commonly associated with learning (Woods, 1985) and are well documented in the literature. It might have been expected that these would be some of the more obvious effects. However, even for the most articulate, the verbal expression of complex emotional states is a difficult thing (Dean and Whyte, 1979; 180). But on closer examination, it appeared that while students may find it difficult to articulate such feelings, this does not mean they fail to experience them. Ellie, for instance, describes how she ' ... got very angry and started shouting a bit in the car' after not doing as well on a project as she had anticipated. The phenomenon of students apparently not feeling cognitive dissonance or disjuncture seems to have been because they did not *report* these effects in response to direct questions, rather than failing to experience them. Three main reasons for this might be (i) the interviewer's questions themselves not being framed correctly to elicit the appropriate kind of response, (ii) student's reluctance to admit that they had experienced such 'emotional' problems or (iii) lack of adequate vocabulary on the part of the interviewer and/or student to sufficiently articulate those experiences. That it emerged during the course of interviews that students had experienced 'cognitive dissonance' to some extent, could reveal the difficulty in expressing precisely what the effects of learning feel like - perhaps everyday vocabulary cannot capture exactly the emotional mix it engenders - but also one of the value of in-depth interviews: themes can emerge during the course of an extended interview that would not necessarily be apparent in response to a questionnaire. Boxes could be ticked, for example, indicating that no emotional upset was experienced. This, however, would not have captured the full picture, and certainly not conveyed the nuances that emerge over the course of a long interview.

Hypothesis 5

Because of the different nature of the courses, there will be a differential effect on people's sense of identity. More specifically, the Women's Studies and Counselling courses will result in relatively greater change in the 'core' sense of self.

The hypothesis can be partially supported. The results show that this is a more complex notion than it might appear. People's perspectives have changed but not all to the same degree, and to that extent the courses have had a differential effect on people's sense of identity. But there appears to be more variation between individuals than between groups. Arguably, there has been greater change in Steve's core sense of self, where he had not originally intended taking the course, yet emerged with a distinctively new perspective, than, say, for Ellie, who enrolled for the Counselling with the intention of becoming a counsellor and completed with the same intention. On the other hand, Beth's increased awareness of and need for her 'own space' can be seen as a more fundamental change than Debbie's response, which was to switch courses because she realised that Women's Studies did not fit in with her goals for promotion. Furthermore, Debbie's aims were more 'instrumental' and work-oriented than Dave's, who was undertaking Labour Studies. There had been an undeniable impact on the lives of the self-help Psychology group, in that all had become very close friends, their sessions had become a part of their lives, one student had gained in confidence to the extent that she wished to participate in the second interview - a dramatic shift from her previous position where she lacked confidence - and another had completely transformed her life. In terms of the 'general' Open Studies students, the overall impact

of the courses seems to have been less distinct. Unlike students on the certificated courses, for example, there was not a planned strategy with an end point. The impact of the courses for these students has been varied. Liz, for instance, had not discernably changed her circumstances or thinking, and had no particular plans for the future. Len, however, felt he was continuing to change, and that the Open Studies had contributed towards this.

If a different emphasis is applied, and the Open Studies are seen in terms of identity continuation and reinforcement, then a different balance emerges. Taking the certificated courses, the Women's Studies students emerge with a strong sense of identification with the group, deriving from shared experience and knowledge. Although Debbie had left the course, she continued to have a strong self-identity and what she had learned she incorporated into her sense of who she was as a person and the way she conducted her job. Karen had become more interested in history, the initial stimulus stemming from childhood, and by the end of the course had embarked upon the travels she had earlier dreamed of. Beth and Hilary both testified to the value of the course and the insights it had given them in both professional and private domains. Since completion of the interviews, Beth has been seen again. She is working part-time at a university and at the time of writing was studying for a degree.

The Counselling course had reinforced the students' aims to practise counselling, but had not generated the same kind of identification between members that the Women's Studies had achieved. There was fragmentation within the group, tension between students and tutors (as reported by the students) and a general dissatisfaction at the end of the course that it had not altogether fulfilled expectations or adequately prepared students for the task of counselling. The students interviewed for this study

remained vague as to the value of the qualification and uncertain as to the next moves. To counterbalance this, however, all felt the course had provided insights and were glad they had continued. Also - as indicated in the results section - the students reported that outside the classroom the group socialised well, although it was 'rather late in the day' by the time they discovered this.

While at an individual level the Labour Studies had impacted upon students' personal identity, at a group level, there was still not the same kind of identification as that experienced by students undertaking Women's Studies. Personal development occurred, but this was within the context of 'union' business and industrial relations. The focus, in this sense, was narrower and more obviously related to 'work' than with the Women Studies, which ranged over a variety of topics, including history and psychology, and was relevant to a wide range of interests within the group. Similarly, although the Labour Studies students related well to each other and benefited greatly from the course, they did not form the same kind of bond as those on the Women's Studies. After the course, the Women's Studies students were still in contact with each other on a social level; the Labour Studies students were not.

With regard to the non-certificated courses, a 10-week Open Studies Psychology course had a substantial impact on five students, who established their own self-help Psychology group. In this way the studies had both reinforced and changed the student identities. It reinforced them because the studies continued to satisfy interests the students already had, and these interests, as has been shown, related to their personal rather than professional lives. In this sense, the studies addressed the 'core' element of individual identity; that is, the students were interested in what made people - and themselves - 'tick.' The studies also changed them, because they launched a successful

project which none had imagined doing before the course. This in itself had changed their lives, since they had made a completely new friendship group and were continuing to meet regularly. It had also changed individuals to the extend of developing confidence and, in one case, a change of career and attitude. In this way, Open Studies had an impact on the 'sub-identity' element of personal identity, where the students negotiated and adopted new roles. This was clearly evident in the structure of their meetings, to which each student contributed.

Issues arising

While Rossan provides a way of both approaching and organising the data, themes emerged that extend beyond her model, yet which affect students' sense of who and what they are and how they are able to cope with their studies. These themes enrich Rossan's model, and gave a fuller, 'human' picture of the students involved. They also complicate it, blurring the distinction between different components of identity, and making it a difficult concept to analyse and discuss. Significant themes which emerged include: adult experience, bereavement, religion, the potential to continue learning and individual identity as evolving and 'multi-dimensional'. While some of these themes - eg, the value of experience in learning - formed part of the research perspective and might have been expected to emerge, others - such as 'religion' and 'bereavement' - were not. These themes, however, have arisen out of concerns expressed by the students themselves. In other words, one of the assumptions of this research has been that identity is evolving and multi-dimensional; ie, it is not a static, unchanging, entity. This could have been, and is, inferred from the data. However, this view is also presented by the students themselves, especially in connection with their different

sub-identities. They are aware, for example, of how they behave differently in different contexts (father, husband, employee), so that while they do have a sense of their own identity and of continuity (reflected in Rossan's notion of generalised traits), they are nevertheless aware of the more complex, and problematic, nature of thinking about 'who and what they are.'

Experience

Experience played a part in the students' learning in different ways, but can be categorized in three main ways: i) the prior experience that adults brought to the classroom itself; ii) the shared experiences of students within a group; iii) the actual experience of being an adult, and the implications of this for studying. Experience brought by the students to the course played an important part in that student's perceptions of the tutor. Two of the Labour Studies students, for instance, felt that at times, they could have explained the subject matter better than the tutor, and that some of the answers given were unsatisfactory. The tutor seemed to be lecturing at them as an 'academic' rather than speaking from direct experience.

> If he's actually lecturing to undergraduates, it's different to people who attend there one evening a week ... I had a feeling he was lecturing to us as he was to undergraduates.

Another of the tutors taught in a more relaxed fashion and seemed able to draw on the students' experience.

> I enjoyed that approach. I found the lecturing interesting in that it was done very much on a relaxed basis. When you're feeling relaxed you tend to express yourself. I found that, rather than a purely lecturing style, quite good.

This was further related to the fact that many adults may not have attended formal lessons in a classroom for a number of years:

> We've been out of a classroom for so long, I think the tutor was teaching with this in mind. He wasn't lecturing at you. He was involving you in it, and then trying to draw out your personal experiences and see how they fitted in with what they were actually lecturing on, and expanding then on that. I found I enjoyed those. With this third guy, no disrespect to the guy at all, I found we were being lectured at. It was pure lecture, without any involvement in it ... I suppose it's the manner in which each lecturer approaches it. (Steve).

The students felt that more could have been made of their experience in the class, although all the students interviewed said there had been good discussion sessions which they had found helpful. In the counselling group, there were changes in the teaching team, which the students felt was disruptive, and the later tutors seemed to lack practical experience.

> We got to know very little about the tutors. I know they were doing some form of counselling but ... I just got the impression that this was the whole syndrome of they went to school, they went to university and they went straight into teaching, and that the real world has somewhere eluded them ... They were confident, but they were just doling out theory to us, really. There was a lot of blackboard writing. (Ellie).

This undermined student confidence in the tutors and may have contributed to the apparent fragmentation of the group mentioned previously:

> I would have thought that on a counselling course, one of the main functions of the tutors was to form an empathic relationship with the people in their group. But I would say they formed more of an antagonistic relationship, which didn't help ... It was like being back at school (Ellie).

All five Counselling students were mothers with children of varying ages, and three had some counselling experience. Yet a recurring comment was that the tutors seemed

unable to benefit fully from this. Indeed, one student remarked that the tutor had made her feel like a 'naughty child'

Although some students reacted against what they perceived as feminist bias in the Women's Studies and others found some of the theoretical concepts 'heavy going' in Psychology, the general feeling was that tutors on these courses had pitched their lessons at the right level, providing a challenge and stimulating motivation. This was reflected in the fact that the Women's Studies students felt they had gained insights and confidence by the end of the course, while, as has been demonstrated, five of the Psychology students were inspired enough to establish their own group. Generally speaking, while most of the students enjoyed discussion as a teaching method, all wanted a structured approach, and felt that their previous experience could be an asset to the course.

Sharing experience with others on the course, either in terms of personal background (eg all mothers, who had a 'common bond') or professional expertise (eg being a shop steward on the Labour Studies) has already been discussed. However, it does seem that this can help to provide students with a sense of belonging, support and learning from others' experience:

> ... I do remember when we were discussing the role of the housewife and Hilda came up with a point that, I must admit, was so simple and so obvious that I'd never thought about it ... in the manner in which she explained it ... Your limitations are what you really know in your own life ... On any course, you pick up the experiences that other people have had in their lives. And I think that's enriching to actually find out what other people have done and what other people's thoughts are ... You've got to listen to what the others say. You've got to be prepared to
>
> adapt your views ... in certain areas they (other students) probably have far more experience of that part of life than you ever have.
>
> (Steve, Labour Studies).

In terms of the experience of actually being an adult, this has consequences for studying. For instance, contrary to theoretical perspectives which see adulthood as at best a period of stability until inevitable physical and cognitive decline, the adults in this sample did not feel they had lost any of their thinking or learning ability. In fact, Ellie suggested her memory was better now than it was 20 years ago:

> I think the more you use your memory, the better it becomes. I mean, my memory is better now than it was when I was 20 ... because I've always used it. I think if you stop using it, the cells atrophy and die. My father learned a poem every day from the age of 30. He's 78 now. And he's got the most wonderful memory.

However, they did feel that they had greater responsibilities and more commitments; there was 'more on their minds.' Their lives were busier and more complex, so they did not have the same amount of time to spend on projects that a young person might have. Paying the mortgage, running a car, holding down a job, caring for their children and household bills were examples given of responsibilities that would not necessarily be shared by younger people:

> If I had a full-time job and four children and a family to run and everything it would be a bit too much. It would affect the time you had to study ... But I wouldn't embark upon a course unless I knew I had enough time. (Ellie).

Even young people at university, who were beginning to acquire 'adult responsibilities' were still regarded as having basically less cluttered lives, with the main focus being their studies. The implication of this is that the adults are not necessarily less able, or slower in their thinking, but that they have more to cope with and their skills might have changed over time. They might not be so 'quick' in different areas. (Using computers was one example given, where young people were perceived as

being 'quick learners', with proficient co-ordination skills). However, the adults pointed out that they had not 'grown up with computers' as younger people had.

Bereavement

Bereavement was mentioned by six of the students in the main cohort, and by other students on Open Studies night classes. Although it was not a main focus of the interview - it had not been considered in the initial design - the impact on individual lives was high. Hilary, for example, broke down in tears during her interview after recalling the tragic death of her brother. Other students were also emotionally affected when they spoke of the loss of someone close, and how it affected their studies:

> Every Wednesday during that two hour lecturing, I was working very hard ... I worked very, very hard all the weekend and during the day I used to work. So I was a bit tired. First term finished. Second term finished. So I pushed on ... unfortunately ... my son was an area manager ... he was in an accident and killed. I was discouraged, completely discouraged, because he was encouraging me and giving me money to spend on books or anything else. So I was discouraged. I did not take the examination. (Leon).

One confident student on the counselling course, for example, was still grieving for the loss of her mother after a year. Another still grieved for the loss of her father in childhood. The inclusion of this 'theme', which was not sought for in the original research design, demonstrates a number of points in relation to the research, and its qualitative nature. First, it illustrates the strength of the qualitative approach in this instance - and in particular the in-depth interview - and the weakness of, say, a 'content analysis' method, where the frequency of a particular word or concept is counted, and conclusions about the salience of that concept drawn from the resulting statistics. In this case, the frequency with which death was referred to by any single

individual was not high, yet its emotional and psychological impact was clearly profound. A similar example might be given for the concept of 'love.' An individual might remark only once that she loves her husband dearly, but that one remark will be saturated with meaning. Qualitative research enables less frequent references like this to be set into the broader context of an individual's life, and so for the meaning to become apparent. Furthermore, such data may not have emerged at all with a more straightforward 'questionnaire' asking about experience on an Open Studies course. The strength of the quantitative approach would have been to accumulate large amounts of standardised data. Had a question about bereavement not been included, however, it would probably never have emerged. The qualitative, in-depth interview allows such additional dimensions to be explored.

In cannot be claimed on the evidence presented here that bereavement in itself correlates in any way with student motivation or the impact of Open Studies on an individual's sense of identity. However, it can be argued that the loss of loved ones affects the individual's sense of self, and that, for whatever reason, students felt compelled to refer to that loss during the interviews. For them as individuals, bereavement was clearly a salient issue. There is a practical issue, in that the emotional impact of bereavement can interrupt studies, but recalling Levinson et al (1979) there is also a psychological point, in that as individuals age, there can be an increasing sense of mortality. Frankl (1990) argues awareness of death can heighten the experience of living:

> Live as if you were living for the second time - and as if you had acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to act now. Once an individual really puts himself into this imagined situation, he will

> instantaneously become conscious of the full gravity of the responsibility that every person bears throughout every moment of his life - the responsibility for what he will make of the next hour, for how he will shape the next day ...

A further point is that development and ageing have been likened to bereavement, where people's old 'selves' have to be discarded and 'grieved for' as they move through life. The death of loved ones can reinforce the sense of mortality - one student remarked that now both her parents were dead she felt 'exposed and vulnerable' almost as if she was 'next in line.' There was no 'buffer' between her an the inevitable. And as Neuberger observes, as individuals age, their lives can be seen in terms of 'time left' rather than amount already lived. This is not to suggest a morbid perspective. The experiences of life can lead to casting off inhibitions and grasping new freedoms and opportunities (Friedan, 1994). Open Studies are among those opportunities. All the students interviewed were eager to learn, regardless of age. Continued learning in a structured way can be seen to contribute to the well-being of individuals as they move into new 'lives' or, to borrow Levinson's term, 'eras.' Bereavement may simply lay bare inevitable mortality and intensify the experience of passing time which is part of the ageing process; but the passing of time brings with it benefits as well as loss, experience and wisdom instead of youthful impetuosity, for instance. With those benefits come new identities. The argument here is that Open Studies, because they are opening up new learning and new experiences, can contribute to the evolvement of individual adult identities.

Religion

Christian religion featured prominently in two ways. One was that several students seemed to have experience education by nuns as Roman Catholics. Some had

consciously rejected Catholicism, while for others it continued to exert a strong influence. Whatever the case, religion played a central and inescapable part of the students' lives. Students on the Counselling course seemed to associate their aims with religion most directly. Their goal was to help others, and this was seen as part of their whole outlook on life, which incorporated a Christian perspective. One student, for example, explicitly linked her Christian values with her decision to embark upon the Counselling course with a view to offering support, guidance and advice to others. It is interesting that some of the tensions which emerged within the group, as reported by the students themselves, seem to have emerged because of the religious stance adopted by some students. One, it will be recalled, remarked on the 'born-again Christians.' The theme of religion is not intended to form a substantial section in this study, other than to remark that it does appear to be a salient issue for some, and continues to influence students' views of themselves. This would support Rossan's suggestion that the 'core' self includes concepts such as being a 'woman' and 'religion.'

Multi-dimensional identity

There is a tendency for individuals to adopt a trait-type approach to identity which assumes a fixed personality distinguished by a set of characteristics: abilities, preferences, habits, traits and temperaments (Marshall and Wetherell, 1989; 112). Some of the literature also seems to imply that because of this bourgeois conception (Sampson, 1989), people are living under a false illusion, and that societies 'create both the types of character essential to societal reproduction and the ideologies necessary so that those characters will function to achieve this reproduction' (ibid; 5). In other

words, the integrated self is a 'sham'. Yet the students interviewed seemed able to manifest two perceptions of themselves at once. On the one hand, there was the integrated self, a bounded 'individual' with his or her own job, habits, lifestyle, interests, attitudes and beliefs - in other words, a person with a strong and mature social identity. On the other hand, the same individuals were well aware of the diverse, even fragmented, nature of themselves, and were certainly aware of having 'different selves' for different occasions. Ellie describes where she feels 'most herself' and most relaxed:

> I suppose I'm most relaxed at home, with family. But I've got lots of good friends who I'm very relaxed with and I enjoy myself when I go out. I don't think there is one particular time. Lots of different places where I feel totally relaxed. I suppose being at home is the most familiar and most relaxing.

While she emphasises home life, she nevertheless indicates that is not the only place she feels she can 'be herself'. There are different settings and different groups. In this case, Ellie is conveying a generalised trait of being able to relax in lots of different company (in other words, it is a characteristic she exhibits across situations), but also that she is not herself at any one particular moment. Hilary also conveyed the satisfactions of work, but also revealed the notion of playing a 'role':

> I suppose at work, perhaps. Sometimes I do visits to families. We see newborn babies. We have a lot of information to impart to people, so in a way ... it's like acting. At home, too. I suppose we have different times.

Other students also revealed an awareness of both 'sameness' and 'difference'; they were aware of being the 'same' person - this lends itself to a 'trait-type' approach and Rossan's (1987) generalised traits component of identity. A person can feel herself or himself to be more or less the same person from one moment to the next. At the same

time, the students were aware of different contexts, and different relationships and how they responded differently in them. One, for example, said she was quite 'serious and sober' at work, but enjoyed going out to 'lively parties' where a different side of her personality could be expressed. This kind of adapting to different situations would relate to James' and other theorists notions of people having 'multiple selves' and 'reflecting' the social context in which they find themselves, and also Rossan's (1987) sub-identities, which can change from one situation to the next. The point is that, despite theorists sometimes appearing to suggest that the self and identity are either 'unified' *or* 'fragmented', the picture presented by the students interviewed for this study was more complicated. There seemed to be an awareness, and a natural ability to live with, what appears to be a contradiction; namely, between having the conception of a *single, unified self* (even, perhaps, a 'true' self) yet also being aware of, and comfortable with - even enjoying - the notion of having *many selves*. (See also Suls, 1982 and Suls and Greenwald, 1983, for discussions on the conception of self as a 'single global entity' or 'disconnected and multiple').

Potential to learn.

Much has already been said about students learning. What the evidence does suggest, is that former assumptions about adult learning, and wanting to learn, need to be questioned. It seems that, regardless of any 'plateau' or 'deficit' models, whereby adults are seen as either reaching a fully mature, stable state which resides at a plateau until inevitable decline, or lose skills in one area which are compensated for in another, adults continue to want and need to learn. It is perhaps not so much a case of what

they are *not* capable of achieving as what they *are* able to achieve that needs to be emphasized. Perhaps unsurprisingly, all the students interviewed retained a belief in adults' potential to continue learning, although factors other than simply an individual's cognitive ability were mentioned, such as other commitments, amount of time and motivation.

Concluding comments: flourishing with age?

A strong overall impression was of adults continuing to strive, to learn, to set personal goals, to undertake new projects; in short, to continue to 'develop', regardless of age. Indeed, some of the older students felt they were flourishing, and never felt more confident. Some reported they had acquired a new outlook on life, with greater awareness, confidence, tolerance, and a continuing eagerness to learn. A crucial point is that, despite the responsibilities of adulthood and the practical difficulties this could mean for Open Studies students, not a single student interviewed questioned the abilities of older people to continue learning and make discoveries about themselves and others. Indeed, there seems to have been a heightened interest in this. Even those students, like Steve, who had originally not intended joining the course, and then did so only because it was directly related to his work, learned more than simply the course material presented. He came away with greater insight into both himself and others.

On the face of it, this might not seem surprising; after all, these were adults who had enrolled for Open Studies, and there was some expectation, both of personal change - 'I like to know what makes people tick' - and of completing the course. Some were hoping to progress further on to part-time degrees. But this cannot be taken for

granted. For it contradicts even relatively recent attitudes towards adults and the cognitive abilities of an ageing population. In preparation for this study, a discussion was held with a tutor of adults with learning difficulties, who was convinced that cognitive and social development continued to even in older adults. Yet there continues to be resistance to the idea of cognitive growth in adults. Baltes and Willis (1978) warned that what was known about intelligence in older people was based on instruments and models developed for the young and that there were relatively few instruments that would reveal the nature of intellectual behaviour in the older adults. Such youth-oriented tests continue to be used on adults, even though researchers know that if tests are constructed to draw on knowledge relevant to adult life, the usual decline found with increasing age seems to be reversed (Friedan, 1994; 69). Coleman (1991) reports that the British Society of Developmental Psychology is exclusively devoted to child development, to the ' ... unfortunate neglect of adult development'. This position seems to derive from the notion that development proceeds along a certain biologically-rooted path towards a specific end point (before adulthood) and that this is a universal pattern of development. Others (Freud. Piaget) have emphasized childhood development or pointed to the inevitable declines in old age.

Friedan (1994) herself in her 60s, points to age as adventure, and the 'generativity' or creative energy that can be found.

> ... it seems to me age can free us all, personally - and our aging society politically - to a new wholeness, previewing in the serious or the seemingly irrelevant efforts of our late years new dimensions for life for the next generation ... It's as if we need to break out of the very rubrics of our previous thinking ... to a new wholeness of approach. (ibid; 589).

It seems then, that at an intuitive, common-sense level, the students had confidence in their own ability to continue to make discoveries about themselves that would seem to contradict earlier theorists' negative stereotype of adults. That they were engaging in a learning activity through Open Studies revealed their determination to continue learning. As the interviews showed, even this was not seen as a one-off project, but part of a continuation, either related to employment, education or personal development.

10. Implications: towards a future agenda?

This study has looked at the experience of adults undertaking Open Studies. Those adults have been seen within a broad, theoretical orientation integrating different perspectives in order to convey the complexity of the topic itself - the impact of Open Studies on adult indentity - and the nature of adulthood. Perspectives including ethical individualism, cognitive psychology and perspective transformation have been drawn upon in order to depict individuals, in terms of process and structure, with both continuity and change (McCall, 1987). As 'process', the adults have been shown to be dynamic and complex beings, functioning in an equally complex social environment. Within the classroom, the dynamic, interacting relationships between the students themselves and the students and their tutors have been seen to lead to cohesion (as in the Women's Studies group) or fragmentation (as in the Counselling group). The individuals themselves are in the 'process' of making and re-making them 'selves', reformulating their identities as they encounter new experiences and new learning. This is revealed in, among other things, the cognitive complexity of the students.

As 'structure', they became an integral part of a network of social relationships, both contributing to and drawing from those relationships, and sustaining a 'social reality'. In the Labour and Women's studies groups, and especially the self-help Psychology group, there was strong identification between members. One Women's Studies student told how they had developed a strong bond over the period of the course. This cannot be taken for granted. The 'bonding' in the Counselling group was quite different, with students sub-dividing into smaller groups, resulting in some

students feeling 'alienated'. Even within the Counselling, group, however there was a 'structure', with students locating themselves - and their tutor - within a particular framework of relationships. But there has also been the 'structure' of identity itself. Rossan's (1987) model has enabled exploration along certain dimensions of experience, which has proved fruitful. It has revealed the complexity of adulthood and adult identity.

This, in turn, has been related to the concepts of 'adult' and 'adulthood', which, upon closer examination, are shown to be far from straightforward. Rather than the stereotype of relatively inactive, inevitably declining older people, new conceptions (such as that offered by Friedan, 1994) are showing that given reasonable health, adults can continue to learn and live long and active lives. This makes the picture more complicated, however, and the suggestion has been made that being an 'adult' is more of a process than an entity, with that typical quality of adulthood - maturity - being an ideal to aim for rather than an automatic inheritance.

That adulthood is regarded as a process with no 'end point' leads to further consideration of the cognitive abilities of adults. The section on post-formal operations reveals how Piaget's benchmark of formal operations at adolescence, implying no further cognitive growth in adulthood, has been seriously challenged, both by those working within the Piagetian tradition, and those outside it. One of the suggestions has been that adult thought is dialectic - that is, constantly interacting with and being transformed by its environment - and also relativistic. in that as adults become more differentiated and reflective thinkers, they are more able to choose between competing but potentially equally applicable alternatives. This leads to the need for adults to manage ambiguities and contradictions inherent in many situations they face.

Finally the study has shown that, as Erikson (1959) suggests, identity is a lifelong matter. Although for Erikson (1963, 1968) the main 'identity crisis' occurs at adolescence, he did point to the ongoing 'crises' faced by individuals throughout their lives and the need to achieve balance and integration for a healthy identity. But what are the educational implications of all this? Where do questions of identity intersect with the process of learning on Open Studies?

To answer the question, some main strands are pulled out for discussion as follows: 1) *Student experience*, 2) *Continuing evolution of identity*, 3) *Identity: men and women*, 4) *A message for practitioners* and 5) *Conclusion: Contribution of research.*

1) Student experience

Taking the first point, there is a need for more research into the experience of part-time adult learners (Schuller, 1988). This is reflected in current research projects (eg at the Open University and in Sweden) and Warwick University's own recognition of the dearth of material in this field. This could feed back into policy-making. The practicalities of adults returning to learn - even down to having difficulty acquiring course books - are important issues both in terms of the university's provision, and the adults' actual learning experience. Despite the motivation of adult learners, such problems can form barriers to learning; and they can be of a different order to those faced by younger, full-time students. Holding down a job, running a family, and numerous social commitments were all mentioned during the course of the study as hurdles in the way of effective learning. Even though some of the women were in full-time employment, for example, they still had to 'make the tea' and ensure the family 'was all right' before setting off for night class. (This point was also raised at

post-graduate research seminars). Among the men, too, work and family commitments - such as transporting children and helping with homework - played their part in making study difficult. The adults participating, however, did not view the 'problems' negatively, but tended to accept them as 'part of life' and attempted to work their studies around them. One Labour Studies student, it will be recalled, completed some of his preparation at his workplace before attending class. Another student planned essays and read course books for Women's Studies while on an aeroplane flying to assignments. The enthusiasm and motivation of adult students has been noted by Open Studies tutors:

> The enthusiasm of adults came as a surprise to me ... After receiving my register for Week 1, which contained only four names, I turned up on the first evening expecting to close down the course at the end of the session. To my surprise, people kept coming through the door, some of them half and hour before time, until a total of thirteen people settled into their places. The following week, the class grew to fifteen, as a married couple returned from a late holiday. (Watton, 1994: 10).

The Psychology self-help group which participated in this study demonstrates the imagination and determination of adults who wish to continue learning. The 'will' - or motivation - seems to exist, then. Further research into the practical problems faced by adults would yield invaluable information, enabling better provision for adults who actually *want* to learn, and perhaps encouraging even greater participation.

This is at the 'practical' level. Such research could also be expanded into looking at personality factors which may *impede* learning in adulthood. Rogers (1989; 157) for example suggests that learning difficulties may range from what might be called emotional variables at one extreme to conceptual difficulties at the other:

> On the one hand, psychological factors prevent the acquisition of new skills or their assimilation of new knowledge; on the other, something perceived to be within the subject-matter itself or the way the new material

> relates to patterns of existing knowledge gets in the way. Both of these extremes spring from the same kind of cause in the end: personality barriers to change.

The purpose here is not to over-emphasize the problems of learning for adults; after all, as has been shown, the students participating in this study were those who were able to overcome whatever difficulties they faced and went on to complete their course. But the point is, that this is an under-researched area of student experience. As Rogers (ibid) points out:

> ... we lack firm evidence for an analysis of the situation under review. We are trying to assess what is 'really' happening rather than what the student participant *says* is happening.

There is scope, then, for the kind of research that asks the students directly, so generating insight into their learning experiences. With a growing elderly population, this is increasingly likely to become an area of concern. If the ideals of 'lifelong learning' and continuing education are to be realised, the experience of the students themselves will have to be investigated and valued. In this context, it also has to be remembered that adult students are becoming 'an increasingly influential group of stakeholders' although, once again, 'often invisible' (Weil, 1993; 159). Such considerations have implications for the provision of adult education classes. As Field (1991; 10) asks:

> How do we judge the educational value of our work? What are the mechanisms for evaluation and monitoring? Or can these matters be left to market forces - a "good" class then being one with loads of students, and "bad" class the one that only just recruits the minimum needed.

He presents a yardstick for focusing on such matters:

> How would Open Studies fare if HMI decided to visit tomorrow? What would HMI look for? How would our classes look to them?

Similarly, Weil (1993; 175) raises the question:

> ... to what extent and why do we feel able to assure new kinds of learners of the possibility of education, not miseducation? How do we know if we offer to new kinds of students an education that enables, rather than compounds, previous disabling forces?

This research, it is suggested, has mined a rich seam of adult experience that normally remains unnoticed, invisible beneath the hurly-burly of running Open Studies classes; a busy tutor has not the time to investigate the intricacies of personal experience. But it is suggested that rather than tutors trying to *guess* about the experience of adults, the adults themselves, through planned research, actually need to be *asked.* In highlighting the experience of students, this does not mean simply the activities within the Open Studies classroom, with the adults as mere recipients of what is on offer, but also that which they bring with them. This issue has arisen during the course of the study and is reinforced, once again, by Watton (1994):

> My students are people with vast experience of life, whose views I very much respect ... If the adults have a real problem, it is probably that they know too much, and want to squash it all into three sides of A4 ...
>
> As their tutor, I come home ... with a renewed respect for all those people out there who attend evening classes. What incredible talents and background knowledge they have! I never cease to be amazed at what maturity brings to study.

2) Continuing evolution of identity

This leads on to the second strand, that of the continuing 'evolution' and maintenance of identity. It has been referred to in this way to convey the continuing change adults face as they move through life. This change, it has been argued, includes shifts of perspective, which provide adults with new ways of seeing themselves and the world around them. Some theorists, like Erikson (1959) have argued that certain tasks are

typically faced at certain times of life, giving rise to qualitatively different 'stages' or 'phases'. Rossan's (1987) model of identity indicates how there can be change (say, in the sub-identities) as well as continuity (as in the enduring 'core' sense of self). The shifts, or transitions, however, are not always smooth. New learning and new ways of being (Kegan, 1982) cause 'disjunction', and can involve a relinquishing of old attitudes and beliefs. What this study has revealed is that learning on an Open Studies course can be inextricably related to the students' sense of identity. It has not been possible to identify a simple cause-and-effect relationship. It cannot be said, for instance, that a certain part of the course caused a particular change in perspective and so had a distinctly measurable impact on identity. In any case, this could seem mechanistic and too behavioural, with the course being reduced merely to the 'stimulus' and the change in identity being the 'response'. Identity, as has been shown, is more complex than this. Yet it is a richer conception for that, and the interaction between Open Studies and student experience all the more compelling.

That there does appear to have been a relationship, however, and Open Studies do seem to have had an impact on identity - students have changed their attitudes, gained insights, arrived at new realisations of their 'social position', become more appreciative of other people's points of view and even changed work practice as a result of the course - raises some important issues. If identity is seen as differentiated and evolving, that is, it has numerous components that change through time, but is nevertheless continuous and integrated, in that people tend to feel they are a 'bounded individual' and have coherent and recognisable 'self', then there are questions about how the change is managed, how education copes with individuals at different points of change, and whether anything can be done to facilitate more effective learning.

Weil (1993; 163) argues that integration implies that ' ... one's sense of personal and social identity does not feel itself to be fundamentally at issue, or risk, in a particular learning environment'. Integration tends to be associated with a sense of equilibrium, or an 'all of a piece feeling' and can also refer to 'heightened feelings of self-validation, arising out of a particular learning situation' (ibid; 163). The 'heightened feelings of self-validation' could be described in terms of 'eudaemonism' (Waterman, 1984), 'self-actualization' (Maslow, 1968) or 'personal expressiveness' (Waterman, 1990). It must be remembered, however, that not all theorists agree with the concept of an integrated or unified self. Clark and Wilson (1991) for example, point out that in contrast to the unified self of the humanists is the idea of 'contested subjectivity' proposed by the post-structuralists. This argument contends that the sociocultural context in which the individual is situated has a formative impact on the construction of the self; subjectivity, in this view, is not unified and stable but fragmented and contested. And, as has been shown earlier, Sampson (1989) regards the unique and more or less integrated self as a bourgeois 'sham'. The adults interviewed for this study, however, appear to have a sense of 'who they are' - ie a unified self, with a '*subjective sense* of an *invigorating sameness* and *continunity*' (Erikson, 1968. Author's emphasis) - while at the same time acknowledging that they can change according to the situation. In Rossan's (1987) terms, they have different sub-identities. This does not seem to threaten their overall sense of self. Blasi (1988) describes the process of integration:

> Identity corresponds to a special mode (or some special modes) of experiencing oneself-as-subject ... The attempt to integrate the various components of one's personality and to find a principle of order whereby past, present and future form coherent biography defines a mode of unity in experiencing oneself. (233).

Yet although there can be a sense of unity within the individual, there is still transformation throughout life, and adult learning is 'intimately tied' to this 'overall, lifelong process of adult transformation' (Finger, 1988; 33). This research has shown how continuing education can become inextricably intertwined with the ongoing development and 'transformation' of adults and would seem to indicate an area of adult experience calling for 'deeper understanding' (ibid).

3) Identity: men and women

Part of that understanding could extend to looking more closely at the identities of men and women. This thesis has not fully explored this issue. But one or two pertinent points can be made. First, key studies into the life cycle and identity have largely been based on men (eg Levinson). This research has drawn largely on the experience of women. There appeared to be some conventional divisions - the women tended to be 'carers' and child rearers, the men tended to be 'workers' as reflected in their interest in Labour Studies. But this stereotypical division is altogether too simplistic. The men revealed a 'soft' side, for example, where they, too, cared for family and, far from being 'independent' and 'competitive' - as the stereotypes might suggest - were equally trying to 'find themselves' and were eager and willing to learn from others,

One had attended the Labour Studies course intending to learn about industrial relations, but those relations included a more sensitive appreciation of the role of women and their relatively low status within paid employment. He had taken steps back at his workplace to redress this balance. More importantly, at the personal level, it had given him a new perspective and new level of understanding of other people's

problems. Similarly, one Labour Studies student was less certain, less assertive, more questioning, more willing to reveal his weaknesses, and more in the 'emancipatory' domain of questioning his own beliefs, values and behaviours than a student from the Women's Studies course who was extremely self-confident, assertive, single-minded and combatorial in her stance, with both women and men. This 'blurring' of expectations would seem to be partially in line with research reported by Broughton (1983; 620) - and challenging Gilligan's (1982) gender 'dualism' - which shows men's capacity for moral commitment based on 'sympathetic caring, a desire for social harmony, and a dedication to non-violence, despite their simultaneous penchant for rationality' (op. cit).

Secondly, however, the study raises questions about the identity of women and their experiences on Open Studies courses and suggests some far-reaching implications for the function of Open Studies in women's lives. Taylor (1990; 104), for example, takes as axiomatic the subordination and oppression of women. Women have internalized messages from their female stereotype and thus will bring, to any situation, much material that women can share of a biological and historical nature:

> Women's early experience sees us expecting the same freedoms as men initially, but then learning the reality of the limitations of women's actual freedom of action. (Taylor, 1990; 106).

According to Taylor (and also Archer, 1990, on the female status as 'potential childbearer' and the implications of this on 'self-definition') the construction of women's personality is intrinsically linked to their gender identity:

> For a woman her social 'identity' and unique self will have emerged together and will reflect the dominant culture (ibid; 110)

A course such as Women's Studies, however, could enable women to question dominant ideological assumptions, partly through cognitive development and the construction of 'self schemata'. These are cognitive generalisations about the self in particular domains and sensitize the individual to information relevant to those domains. The heightened interest and attention 'produces a dense and well-organised store of knowledge' and those with self-schemata in particular domains 'develop a type of expertise for the domain' (Gurin and Markus, 1989, p154). This means that attention to 'women's issues' as might be presented on a Women's Studies course, for instance, would heighten awareness of those issues, and so contribute towards a woman's sense of self. Gurin and Markus, for example, show that:

> ... gender identity influenced the speed and confidence with which women processed gender-relevant material and that cognitive centrality was the critical property of identity in these effects (p166).

Cognitive centrality is defined as 'the amount of thought the individual reports devoting to gender.' (p155). Gurin and Markus help to relate considerations of cognitive processes to a social context and point to the cognitive effects of individuals becoming aware of themselves as members of a particular category; in other words, women would gain critical awareness into their role *as* women.

One implication of this is that Women's Studies, for example, could contribute not just to the empowerment of women and a viewing of the world 'through women's eyes', but also more broadly:

> ... recognition within academic settings not simply on the basis that women's academic contributions are the same weight as those of men, but on the notion that women's work in some areas has contributed, and is continuing to contribute, to a transformation of what is defined as knowledge. (Coulson and Bhavnani, 1990; 66).

4) A message for practitioners

There are clearly many possibilities for further investigation. What this research has shown is that adulthood is a complex process achieving both integration and evolution and change, with implications for adult development extending well beyond the four walls of the Open Studies classroom. One the one hand, there is the 'invigorating sameness and continuity' (Erikson, 1968). Yet on the other hand, there is a life-long process of 'transformation' (Finger, 1988; 33). The message for practitioners would seem to be that to teach well, they need to develop flexibility, to become aware of the complexities of adulthood and be responsive to learners. This involves looking at 'philosophical issues pertaining to the goals and purposes of adult education' (Hayes, 1993; 173) but also 'assumptions about the characteristics of adults as learners and how instruction should relate to those characteristics, if at all'. This thesis has shown that the 'characteristics' of adults cannot be taken for granted. As such, there can be no one 'correct' or 'traditional' method of teaching. In her review of recent literature, Hayes (ibid; 175) observes that several key perspectives suggest the teacher:

> ... needs a broad repertoire of methods and just as importantly
> the ability to decide when a particular method is most appropriate.

In common with other adult learners, those who participated in this research were motivated, and eager to learn. In order to support that willingness, practitioners need to ensure that the students have ' ... a secure framework in which to learn, and a sense of continuity and progression' (Belbin, 1976). This study has also shown that some theorists have called for greater critical awarneness on the part of practitioners. The findings of this research, revealing the rich diversity of adult experience, even within a

relatively small group, would reinforce that view. A key implication of this research, then, is that the 'intelligent, sensitive teacher' should become engaged in:

> ... the ongoing process of reflection on practice, leading to greater understanding of learners and refinement of teaching strategies. (Hayes, 1993; 179).

5) Conclusion: Contribution of research.

Reflection upon practice is aided by research, since this reveals processes, structures and relationships in a way not normally possible. This final section looks briefly at the contribution of qualitative research to educational studies. This research has raised questions about the continuing potential of adults, even into later life. Despite increasing longevity and evidence to show that adults are able to benefit from learning throughout their lives, this remains a controversial topic and influences both the public perception of adult education and its funding (Legge, 1982). These perceptions are vital, since they can influence both access to funds and public reaction to adult education:

> If society does not believe adults can learn well, then adult education itself can be dismissed as a foolish pretence, functioning at the trivial level of hobbies and pastimes (Rogers and Groombridge, 1976).

One value of qualitative research such as that conducted for this study, which looks in depth at the experience of adults, and 'gets under the skin' of adult learners, is that it graphically demonstrates how adult education is far from a 'foolish pretence' and indeed intersects in crucial ways with people's lives, and the meanings they are seeking to give shape to what they do and how they live. It has taken a step further than merely state that adults are able to continue learning, and has suggested that this

learning not only 'benefits' them but has an impact on their identity, their sense of who and what they are. In this way it contributes to a growing area of interest, reflected in current work both in the UK and elsewhere. There are research projects at the Open University (Woodley, 1994) and in Sweden (Bron, 1993), for instance. In an increasingly complex and ever-changing world, the need to know 'who we are' and where we fit into that world becomes more pressing. The study also contributes to the growing body of qualitative literature (R. G. Burgess, 1985) and reflects the potential of this research methodology for extending the knowledge base of adult education in the future (Merriam, 1989). This study is now briefly considered in the light of Merriam's three criteria for assessing the longer-term significance of a piece of qualitative research, namely the extent to which: *(i) a particular piece of research affects practice*, (ii) *influences subsequent writing and (iii) stimulates further research thinking*. The response is speculative, but identifies the potential for further research.

The first point is *the extent to which a particular piece of research affects practice*. This research, which itself has grown out of Open Studies, has revealed the rich diversity of adult experience and drawn out some of the implications of this for adult educators, in that a keen sense of the 'processes' of adult growth and development is necessary if effective teaching is to take place. The words of the adult learners themselves are of intrinsic interest, and should stimulate further reflection upon adult experience.

Whether the research actually *influences subsequent writing and thinking* is difficult to predict. In this work, there has been a drawing together in a new way of different concepts. Rossan's model of identity, for instance, has not been used in this

way before. By integrating it with Mezirow's perspective transformation, a potentially stimulating area for further investigation emerges. This also falls within contemporary trends in research, reflecting the continuing concern with adult education and a growing interest in the concept of 'identity'. This research has shown that through Open Studies, adults can move on to new levels of awareness, reflecting Mezirow's concern:

> ... for forms of education which are liberating rather than merely adjusting, and which point to new possibilities for thought and action rather than fixate the learner to the status quo.

Merriam's third criterion is whether qualitative enquiry *stimulates further research.* Rossan's (1987) model would seem to offer a useful tool for approaching the experience of adults in education. As Merriam points out, however, in developing the knowledge base of any field 'it is important that lines of inquiry be established which take into account and build upon previous research.' (163) Participation (including motivation) and self-directed learning are two major areas of research in adult education rooted in qualitative study. Although different in emphasis, this research can be seen to relate to work by Houle (1961), for example, who is interested in 'what kinds of men and women retain alert and enquiring minds throughout their years of maturity?' Houle hopes ' ... that these people and their activities could somehow be fitted together into patterns that would throw light on the meaning of continuing education'.

There is also a clear connection to the work of Mezirow, himself drawing on Habermas, on perspective transformation. Any further research in this area, then, which merges the concept of identity in adults with perspective transformation - in

terms of reconstructing personal frames of reference resulting from continued learning experiences - will break fresh ground, while building upon previous research.

This study highlights the possibilities, but has not fully explored these. Despite the vast literature on the education of adults, confusion abounds and basic questions about how adults learn and the role of the educator continue to be asked. Hayes (1993) draws attention to these issues:

> What do teachers need to know and do in order to teach adults well? this question is clearly basic to the adult education enterprise. It is a tribute to the complexity of teaching that this question concerns not only beginning teachers but also continues to engage more experienced teachers, scholars and researchers (173).

She adds that it is not a question easily resolved, but one that involves 'philosophical issues pertaining to the goals and purposes of adult education':

> It involves assumptions about the characteristics of adults as learners and how instruction should relate to those characteristics, if at all. Also central are questions relating to the role and responsibilities of the teacher in particular settings (173).

These issues have been addressed during the course of this research, both from the theoretical and 'experiential' point of view. The very real issue of the role and responsibilities of the 'teacher' has been reflected in the actual comments of the students, sometimes expressing strong dissatisfaction with the situation and the tutors' role as they perceived it. What this study has done is to raise questions about some of the issues involved in adult education, drawing not simply on the perspectives of professional theorists, but on the very voice of the students themselves. This project then, suggests potential areas for further investigation, rooted firmly in Open Studies, while at the same time relating those possibilities to previous research.

The qualitative nature of the research itself and reflects a theme stated in the first

chapter, that of people's seeking meaning in their lives. For:

> ... qualitative researchers are interested in *meaning* - how people make sense of their lives, what they experience, how they interpret those experiences, how they structure those social worlds. It is assumed that meaning is embedded in people's experiences and mediated through the investigator's own perceptions. A researcher cannot get 'outside' the phenomenon (Merriam, 1988. Author's emphasis).

A cautionary note needs to be sounded on the assumptions made about adults within this thesis generally in terms of both a theoretical orientation and also as a result of the interviews. These assumptions tend to confirm the bias of depicting adults in a positive light with potential to continue learning throughout life. While this depiction challenges earlier negative stereotypes and is in keeping with modern research into adulthood, it is not to deny that ageing can bring about serious mental and physical difficulties, and pathological disorders (Blackburn, 1988). The adults participating in this research were a mobile, able-bodied, apparently healthy, self-selecting population intentionally involving themselves in the learning process. Yet people do face physical and mental problems and the 'unavoidable consequences' of change as they get older (Greer, 1992). People are living longer. Each year, more countries join those whose fastest growing segment is the octogenarian population (Fretz, 1991: 179). Yet along with the rapid increase in this group comes increasing evidence of their economic, physical and mental health problems. Fretz (ibid) points out for example that:

> Studies in the United States suggest that approximately 20 per cent of the oldest old are in need of mental health treatment. Four out of five elderly persons in nursing homes have a diagnosable psychiatric disorder. Older people commit suicide in far greater proportions than younger cohorts. (179).

It has also been noted, however, that many of the problems stem from the actual social conditions in which ageing adults find themselves. In effect, some of the problems

could be avoided with better care and quality of interaction with other people. A common observation seems to be that it is interaction with the context which assists learning - and better health - in later life.

> ... we see the adult as an individual in interaction with others in society, and we feel that this interaction process is central to the understanding of the processes by which age-related changes occur in adulthood. Thus, the process of change, stability, timing of development, and the accumulation of experience seems to be best understood in terms of the individual interacting with others ... (Kimmel, 1980: 44).

A final word on the theme of interaction, combined with that of taking in new perspectives through transformation, and the implications of this for education and identity comes from Figurski (1987) who observes:

> The ability to take the perspective of another has long been considered by symbolic interactionists and cognitive developmentalists as fundamental to the development of the self ... Yet it is important to recognize that the ability to manipulate one's perspective is not only important to self awareness but also has important implications for awareness of other people.

Through Open Studies, students are able to discover new potential in themselves. This potential is realised, as this study has indicated, through interaction with others. Wegner (1982) argues that recognizing others have a different point of view 'changes our understanding and awareness of them as well'. Identity, then, resides not just in the individual but in others. Combined with Rossan's model, and the need for further research in adult education, the concept would seem to be a suitable candiate for a future research agenda. Through the social learning experience of Open Studies, the way is open for new perspectives, new ways for practitioners, as well as students, to gain greater insight into the world of the adult, and deeper understanding not just of 'others' - but also of the 'self.'

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ABBREVIATIONS

APHE - Association for Part-Time Higher Education.

ACACE - Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education.

CERC - Continuing Education Research Centre (Warwick University, Westwood Campus).

NIACE - National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.

SRHE - Society for Research into Higher Education.

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1) SPONTANEOUS SELF-CONCEPT

To begin with, I'd like you to take your time and simply tell me about yourself. (Describe yourself to me).

Probes

i) Is there anything else you would like to add?

ii) Do any of the points you have mentioned have any special significance for you?

iii) (Why?)

2) BACKGROUND INFORMATION (If not covered in above)

i) Date of birth?

ii) Place of birth?

iii) Current occupation?

a) How long have you been in your present job?

iv) Marital status:

a) single b) married c) separated d) divorced e) widowed f) living with partner

v) Have you any children?

a) how many? b) ages? c) sex?

vi) Any other dependants?

vii) What is your religion?

vii) How long have you lived in x?

3) FAMILY BACKGROUND

i) Could you tell me about your family background?

Probes

b) Where were your parents born?

c) How old were your parents when they had children?

d) What were your parents occupations?

e) How many members were there in your family?

f) Which child were you?

g) Where were you born?

h) Where did you live as a child?

i) What were relationships like in your family?

(How did you get on?)

ii) What were your parents like?

iii) Are you like your parents at all?

a) In what ways?

b) In what ways are you different?

iv) Did your parents take an interest in your education?

a) What were their hopes for you?

b) Did your brothers/sisters have any educational aims?

v) How would you describe your upbringing?

4) SCHOOL

i) Did you like/dislike school?

a) Could you say why?

ii) What sort of schools did you attend?

(eg state, private, boarding, girls', boys', Catholic, convent)

iii) Have you any educational qualifications? (If not already given)

a) What are they?

b) What subjects are they in?

iv) What subjects did you enjoy most at school?

a) Are there any you would like to have done but were unable to do so for whatever reason?

vi) What options were open to you when you left school?

a) How old were you when you left school?

viii) Could you tell me what you have been doing since you left school?

a) Did you start work or go into any further education?

b) Could you elaborate?

(If work)

a) What work did you do?

b) What qualifications did you need?

c) Did you have to undergo any further training?

(If further education)

a) Could you tell me about this?

b) What courses did you do?

c) What qualifications did they lead to? (How long did this take?)

e) Did you go on to any higher courses after that?

ix) How long has it been since you completed any formal education or training?

(ie in a classroom, on a training course)

x) How long have you been in your present job?

5) THE COURSE.

i) How are you getting on with the course you are now doing? (If started)

a) Is it as you imagined?

ii) How do you evaluate how well you are doing?

iv) What made you decide to join the course?

v) Did you have any concerns before you started?

vi) Why are you interested in this particular course?

viii) What do you hope to gain from it?

ix) Why did you begin the course at this time in your life rather than any other?

a) Did you have a clear picture of what the course was about before you started?

b) How clearly are the goals of the course set out?

c) Have you encountered any difficulties so far?

xiii) How do your family and friends feel about you doing the course?

xiv) Could you tell me, as fully as you can, what the course is about?

a) Does it correspond in any way with how you actually think and feel about things in your day-to-day life outside the course?

b) Which parts hold particular interest for you? b) Could you say why?

xvi) Do you regard yourself as a student?

xvii) In your view, what makes a good student? How would you describe a good student?

xviii) How are you coping with the demands of the course?

xiv) How does taking the course fit in with any other commitments you have?

xx) Have you had to make sacrifices to come on to the course?

a) How do you feel about making them?

xxii) Does the course affect your family or social life in any way?

a) Could you say in what way?

xxiii) How important to you is taking the course?

xxiv) How do you get on with the other students?

xxv) To what extent to you feel you identify with the students in your group?

a) How much did you know about the subject matter of the course before you started?

xxvii) How far do you feel you share knowledge and experience with other students at this stage of the course?

xxviii) What impact do you think this course will have on your life?

xxix) If you had to rate the impact on a scale of 1-10, where would you put it?

xxx) Do you intend following the course up in any way?

a) In what way?

xxxi) Are there any methods of teaching or classroom organisation you prefer?

a) Could you briefly tell me about any other courses you have done?

b) What attracted you to them?

6 REFLECTED APPRAISALS

i) How important to you are the views of other people about what you do?

ii) To what extend to other students on the course influence your own attitudes and behaviour

iii) How do you respond to praise?

iv) How do you cope with criticism?

v) Do you try to live up to other people's expectations of you?

vi) If someone who knew you well had to give a brief description of you, what would they say?

vii) Do you think that being a man/woman is an advantage or disadvantage:

a) As a student?

b) In life generally?

7) SOCIAL COMPARISONS

i) Can you name anybody who has had a particular influence on you?

a) In what ways?

ii) Have you ever consciously tried to be like anyone else?

iii) Do you ever compare yourself with others?

iv) Do you ever learn, informally, by simply watching what other people do and say?

a) Could you give me an example?

vi) What qualities do you admire most in others?

vii) What you least like in others?

8) PERSONAL STANDARDS

i) Do you like to set your own standards?

a) Do you usually meet these standards?

b) What happens if you fail to meet them?

ii) Is success important to you?

Can you say why?

iii) How do you cope with failure?

iv) Does the course cause you any anxiety in any way?

a) What causes it?

b) How do you deal with this?

9) CONFIDENCE

i) How confident a person would you say you are?

a) In what areas are you most confident?

b) Are there any areas where you lack confidence?

c) In what ways might changing your level of confidence make your life different?

ii) Do you think the course will have any effect on your level of confidence?

10) INDEPENDENCE

i) How do you see yourself in terms of independence?

a) Would you regard yourself as an independent person?

b) Is there anybody you feel you depend on?

c) Who? d) How?

ii) Who are the people most dependent on you?

iv) When do you feel you are most yourself?

11) CURRENT IDENTITY

i) What image do you have of yourself at this point in your life?

a) How do you feel about this?

b) What would you say are your best qualities?

c) Is there anything you don't like about yourself?

d) Is there anything about yourself you would like to change?

e) Is there anything you would like to keep the same?

ii) Do you feel you have reached your full potential?

iii) Do you think the course you are doing will affect the way you see yourself?

iv) Do you have any other interests/activities besides the course?

v) Can you say what motivates you?

vi) We've talked about your background, what you have done in the past and what you are doing at present. Looking ahead now, what do you see yourself doing in a few years' time? What are your plans for the future?

vii) Is there any comment you would like to make about the interview?

a) Do you think it has reflected your views and feelings?

APPENDIX B

LIFE DIAGRAM

LIFE DIAGRAM: PAGE 1

NAME .....OCCUPATION.....

AGE .....

IN the space below, draw a diagram in any way you wish to illustrate your life from birth up to the present and looking ahead to the future. You may turn overleaf if necessary.

Include any significant events or stages.

Estimate and mark where you are now in your life.

LIFE DIAGRAM: PAGE 2

ON this page spend a few minutes writing brief notes on why some of the features marked on your diagram hold significance for you.

a) Can you detect any noticeable phases? ie:

i) periods when relatively little change occurred, linked by

ii) transitions or 'crisis' times when there was quite a lot of change.

b) Are there any ways in which your feelings about some of these events or phases changed over time? Can you describe them?

APPENDIX C

DIARY SHEET

See following page for Appendix C - Diary Sheet

NAME ..... DIARY SHEET NUMBER ..... WEEK BEGINNING .....

READING

This section records the amount of time you spend reading books and other course material this week. Please tick the number of hours in the appropriate box. If more than eight, please put number in box marked "more."

WRITING

This section records the amount of time you spend on written work (eg assignments) this week. Please tick the number of hours in the appropriate box. If more than eight, please put number in box marked "more."

OTHER ACTIVITY

This section records the amount of time you spend on other activities, such as fieldwork. Please tick number of hours in appropriate box. If more than eight, please put number in box marked "more."

COMMENT

This section is for you to make any additional comment. Points you could consider are:

I) Did you find the work relatively difficult or easy?
II) Was it *more* or *less* time consuming than you expected?
III) Did you find the work boring or interesting?
Iv) Did you suffer frustration, anger, anxiety or depression at any stage?
v) If you did have such feelings, how did you overcome them?
vi) What are your general feelings about the course so far?

Please continue your comments overleaf if necessary.

DAY	READING 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	More	WRITING 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	More	OTHER ACTIVITY 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	More
MONDAY																											
TUESDAY																											
WEDS																											
THURS																											
FRIDAY																											
SAT																											
SUNDAY																											
Weekly total																											

NAME ..... DIARY SHEET NUMBER ..... WEEK BEGINNING .....

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DAY	READING 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	More	WRITING 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	More	OTHER ACTIVITY 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	More
MONDAY																											
TUESDAY																											
WEDS																											
THURS																											
FRIDAY																											
SAT																											
SUNDAY																											
Weekly total																											